

Friday January 2 1998

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Sport 98

Al Fayed up: Roy Collins asks the Harrods owner about Fulham and the FA cup

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Comment

In search of spies

Loyalist realignment could end ceasefire and talks

A shattered peace

Truant pupils blamed for wave of street crime



Flowers left outside the Clifton Tavern yesterday, scene of the New Year's Eve shooting which killed one man and injured five

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLOS R. LOPEZ-BARILLAS

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

DETEKTIVES in Northern Ireland suspect that the three-year-old ceasefire, claimed responsibility for the shooting of Eddie Treanor in Belfast, it is thought that the Ulster Defence Association played a part.

The UVF is relatively weak in Belfast, and security sources say the group would

have needed support to carry out the attack.

The move is ominous. It means that the 16-month-old UVF, regarded as a pariah by the established loyalist paramilitaries, has been welcomed back into the fold following the death of its leader, Billy Wright. His murder in the Maze Prison six days ago has put Northern Ireland on the edge, with violence threatening to spiral out of control.

Earlier this week there were indications that the UVF and its ally, the Ulster Freedom Fighters, both signatories to the 1994 ceasefire, were poised to return to war.

Security sources believe a renewed terror campaign will be launched. They were braced last night for a bloody response from the Irish National Liberation Army, which shot Wright last Saturday and the killing was also a long way from its power base.

Mr Treanor, aged 31, an office worker, was killed as he sat drinking with his girlfriend in the Clifton Tavern, a Catholic bar in north Belfast. Doormen prevented the two masked gunmen from claiming more deaths. Five revelers were injured, although all are expected to recover.

The UVF had promised to avenge Wright within hours, gunmen killed Seamus Dillon, aged 45, a Catholic and former IRA fighter, as he worked as a doorman at a hotel in Dunganstown, Co. Tyrone. But the UVF warned of more to come.

Billy Hutchinson, of the Progressive Unionist Party, linked to the outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force, the third main backer of the ceasefire, believed it unlikely the UVF was solely responsible for the latest attack. The hijacking of a car used in the murder was outside its territory, and the killing was also a long way from its power base.

Police will be examining the weapons used before deciding who else was involved, but senior detectives are convinced the UVF, which is strongest around mid-Ulster, could not have carried out such a mission alone.

Loyalist sources agreed. They think that the UVF, which helped the UVF, and that, in doing so, were sending a message that loyalism was re-uniting under a hard-line agenda.

Mr Hutchinson said that if one of the main loyalist groups was involved, the peace process was at an end. "There's no way it can withstand a murder from one of the organisations represented at the talks."

Gerry Kelly, the former IRA bomber and Sinn Féin negotiator, speaking outside the Clifton Tavern immediately after the attack, said: "The peace process is shattered."

He re-affirmed Sinn Féin's

commitment in the multi-party negotiations yesterday.

Loyalist prisoners will decide this weekend whether to instruct their political parties to withdraw from the peace process at Stormont. 160 paramilitary prisoners from both sides of the conflict are due to return to the Maze today after 10 days' Christmas parole. It is looking likely that the prisoners will vote to pull out of the talks, which will end of the loyalist ceasefire.

Loyalists believe the republican movement has won concessions from the Government through violence, and that they can only push their agenda forward through similar means.

The death of Wright, who voiced that view for two years, appears to have crystallised loyalist thinking.

Wright's commanders in the UVF ordered him to quit Northern Ireland 16 months ago because of his opposition

to the ceasefire and his dismissal of the Stormont negotiations, but he defied their death threat and formed the UVF.

Many loyalists now believe he was right.

Even Robin Eames, primate of the Church of Ireland, spoke yesterday of "the deep feeling of resentment" among Protestants over the Government's handling of the peace process. He believed that Northern Ireland was at "the beginning of a very dark and dangerous period."

Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionist security spokesman, who has urged Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to resign, said: "There is a total lack of confidence within the Northern Ireland community, and this provides the circumstances where terrorism can flourish."

John Carvel
Education Editor

CHILDREN aged between 10 and 16 are responsible for 40 per cent of all street robberies and a third of car thefts and burglaries in London, according to the Metropolitan Police.

Tony Blair has ordered the Downing Street social exclusion unit to give urgent priority to devising new strategies against truancy after revealing figures that reveal the extent of a crime wave perpetrated by youngsters meant to be at school.

Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, told the exclusion unit, which was set up last month to devise new solutions to the problems of poverty — that most of the offences took place during school hours.

The unit has also received a bleak report from the Basic Skills Agency about appallingly low educational attainment among offenders aged between 17 and 25.

In-depth interviews with 600 such offenders showed that 75 per cent could not write their name and address without error. Another 48 per cent could not write their name and address and give more than two pieces of information about themselves without making mistakes.

About half had difficulty telling the time and giving the days of the week or the months of the year in the right order. Only 80 per cent could fill in a job application form satisfactorily.

The survey was part of a project funded by the European Social Fund to investigate links between criminality and educational underachievement. A cross-section of offenders from towns and rural areas in Shropshire were interviewed just after conviction.

Out of school

They commit 33 per cent of car thefts and 50 per cent of house burglaries.

Nearly two-thirds of offenders under 25 used to be habitual truants.

Nearly half cannot tell the time and name the days of the week in order.

About 90 per cent said they had been truants at some stage in their school careers and 64 per cent said they were habitual truants, absenting themselves for a day or more a week soon after arriving in secondary school.

The average age when consistent truancy started was 12-13 and 55 per cent said they committed crimes while absent without leave.

Stephen Byers, the school standards minister and one of five ministers of state attached to Mr Blair's unit, said he was shocked by the statistics. Too many children — usually boys — were being "caught in a downward spiral". Unable to read and write at 10, they became disenchanted when they could not cope on reaching secondary school and were then easily led astray.

"These figures show how important early intervention is to ensure that every child has the ability to read and write. There is now clear evidence that for many youngsters the lack of basic skills leads to truancy and exclusion, ending all too often with turns to page 2, column 5

Labour Euro-MPs go Green and face expulsion

Ewen MacAskill, Chief
Political Correspondent

TWO Euro-MPs face expulsion from the Labour Party after yesterday switching from the Socialist Group in the European parliament to the Green bloc.

The two, Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr, have long been troublemakers for Tony Blair and Labour headquarters happily mounted a powerful campaign yesterday to give them a final push.

A Labour spokesman said: "If they do not resign, disciplinary action will be taken against them."

Mr Coates and Mr Kerr,

both leftwingers, have been protesting over the benefit cuts for lone parents and changes to the ways European candidates are selected, culminating at the weekend in an Observer article comparing New Labour to Old Tories, written by the pair.

While the row is another sign of the tensions within Labour created by Mr Blair's reforms of welfare and internal party structures, the Labour leadership will be delighted the two have provided an excuse to ditch them.

Mr Coates and Mr Kerr were openly defiant last night, with Mr Kerr in particular making personal remarks about Mr Blair, calling

him on the Labour left in "boot this bastard out". They insisted they will not make it easy for Labour by resigning and will have to be expelled.

Labour began disciplinary action that will bring this about, with a report going to the ruling national executive committee.

Membership of the Green bloc means Mr Kerr and Mr Coates will be part of a group that puts up candidates against Labour, and that will automatically disqualify them from membership of the Labour Party.

The executive of Mr Coates's constituency party last night wrote to him demanding he resign. It told the

MEP for North Nottingham and Chesterfield: "We consider that you have, by these actions, expelled yourself from membership of the Labour party and are no longer a Labour MEP."

While the two can be stripped of Labour membership, they cannot be removed as Euro-MPs and signalled their intention to sit as independent Labour members in the Green bloc.

The Euro-MPs were almost certain to be dropped by Labour during reselection later this year. Mr Kerr, MEP for West Essex and East Hertfordshire, predicted that between four and six other Labour Euro-MPs would

probably join them as independent Labour.

Mr Coates and Mr Kerr, in a letter on December 27 to Pauline Green, president of the European Parliament, insisted the decision to join the Green bloc was a technicality. They had been required to tell the President of the European Parliament before January 1 that they belonged to a group receives £25,000 per member. The Euro-MPs said they could not say Socialist Group because of uncertainty over Labour's attitude towards them.

"The Greens have offered us honorary membership and would be willing to offer us the hospitality of their group

until this problem can be resolved within our group," the pair said.

The leader of the Tory Euro-MPs, Edward McMillan-Scott, called for Mr Blair to return from his Seychelles holiday to deal with the "growing crisis facing the Labour Party".

He added: "It was a mistake to issue a New Year message calling on Britons to tighten their belts while he scoffs food prepared by the Shah of Persia's chef. Mr Blair is behaving like Marie Antoinette, who told the starving 'Let them eat cake'."

Inside

Britain

Tony Blair is to head a Downing Street task force to try to awaken businesses to the dangers of the "millennium bug".

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The Mindan Palace at Knossos on Crete is "dissolving like a candy bar" under the weight of 4,000 visitors a day, say conservationists.

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The FA is seeking an increased supply of World Cup tickets for England fans to reduce the potential for a black market.

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A burst of gunfire, a legacy that will live on forever

John Mullin on the night loyalist terrorists paid a visit to the Clifton Tavern, killing one and injuring five

EDDIE Treanor had only recently met Róisín Shevlin. She was 30, a year younger than him and had a six-year-old daughter. But the two hit it off right away, and starting going out together.

Eddie, who worked for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, often drank in Cassidy's on the Antrim Road in north Belfast, but the Clifton Tavern was closer to Róisín's home in Rosevale Street. They decided to go there on Wednesday to welcome in the New Year.

The Clifton, an ugly chocolate-brown building, is a warm, friendly place once through the door. It was recently redecorated in fancy blue wallpaper with patterned cream borders, and was a fine place to enjoy a couple of pints and wait for 1998.

Just before midnight Eddie was pronounced dead at the Royal Victoria Hospital. He had suffered dreadful head injuries, and doctors knew they were fighting a hopeless battle from the outset.

Loyalist terrorists came calling at the Clifton Tavern at 9.07pm. It is a Catholic bar in a Catholic enclave in the north Belfast. The two gunmen stayed only seconds, but the legacy of their visit will live forever.

They had hijacked a white Vauxhall Senator in the loyalist lower Shankill Road area half an hour earlier. They assaulted the car's

owner, and held his family hostage until their mission of sectarian murder was complete.

After the Irish National Liberation Army murdered loyalist figurehead Billy Wright at the Maze prison four days earlier, Catholic pubs and clubs had feared another massacre. Many decided to close on New Year's Eve rather than risk it.

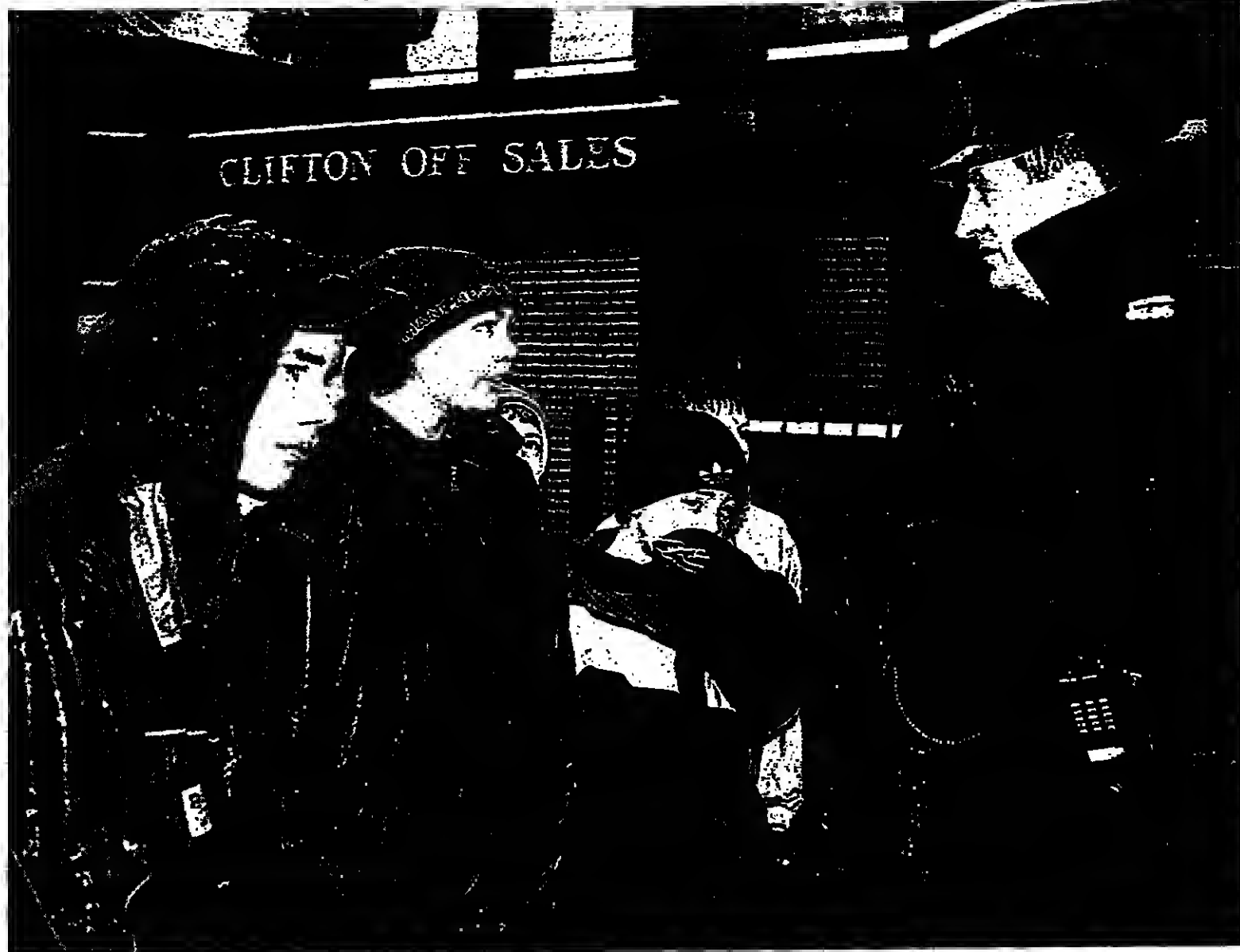
The fatal shooting of Seamus Dillon, aged 45, a doorman at the Clifton Hotel, Dunganannon, Co Tyrone, hours after Wright's murder was, warned the hardline Loyalist Volunteer Force, a more mark of respect to its fallen leader. Its so-called theatre of operations was to be stepped up.

So there was tighter security than usual at the Clifton Tavern. Two houncers manned the door, standing inside a vestibule leading through a door to the main bar. Behind them, a small wired-glass window, looking in on three dozen or so revelers relaxing there.

Timothy Murphy, aged 53, an unemployed labourer, was inside the doorway when the two masked gunmen arrived. One is said to have been carrying an Uzi sub-machine-gun; the other a handgun.

Mr Murphy was shot in the commotion, but the doorman, also hit, are thought to have done enough to limit the gunmen's opportunity.

Unable to get through the inside door into the bar, the gunmen instead fired through



An RUC officer and local children yesterday outside the Clifton Tavern, scene of the loyalist gun attack on New Year's Eve

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN LITTLE

the window, trying to pick off drinkers.

Six were injured. Eddie Treanor fatally. It was unclear yesterday whether the shot that killed him was deliberately aimed or whether he was unlucky, hit in the spray of bullets. None of the others was in a life-threatening condition.

Mr Murphy, a father of seven, was doing well in intensive care at the Mater Hospital. As he left home on Wednesday to walk around the corner for a quiet drink, his wife had begged him not to go.

His daughter Maria, aged 25, said one bullet had hit him in the left arm and sliced into his body. He underwent an hour-and-a-half of surgery,

during which part of his bowel was removed, she said. His son, also Timothy, aged 30, was one of the first on the scene.

Maria said: "My brother had just left the club, and was walking back to the house when he heard the shots. He has first aid, and he rushed back to see if he could help. He was there within seconds. There was panic everywhere. Nobody knew what to do. Someone shouted 'There's another one hit here, and it was dad'."

The family had been looking forward to 1998. One son died in a car accident in the United States seven months ago.

Although he often stayed with Róisín, Eddie still went

home regularly to his widowed mother, Mary, at her house in Glanleam Drive.

The family has stayed there for decades, and are well-liked. Neighbours are proud of the way the seven children, six boys and one girl, all made something of their lives.

Tommy Treanor, the father, was formerly a soldier in the British Army. He fought in the second world war. He died three years ago.

One of his sons lives in the US, another, Brendan, is a solicitor in Lancashire. Police were still trying to contact them last night. Yvonne, the only daughter, travelled from Lurgan, Co Armagh, to comfort her mother.

Joan Murphy, Eddie's aunt,

answered the door of the handsome detached house yesterday. Her night had been spent weeping, and she cut a heartbreaking figure.

"He was a lovely, gentle fellow, who looked after his widowed mother. He was just going out for a pint with his girlfriend. He was never involved in politics, or anything like that."

"We are all in shock and very, very distressed. His mum can't talk. She is too upset. It is a terrible, terrible thing."

Maureen Leavay, aged 74, a neighbour, said: "I have known him since he was a boy. My son Paul was born around the same time, and Edmund was like another son to me."

"He was a great fellow. He was a lovely big gentle lump. It's terrible. They are such a lovely family. They have all done so well. His poor mother. I don't know what she will do now."

"They are well used to murder in north Belfast. It has suffered one-sixth of the 3,300 killings during the Troubles, more than anywhere else."

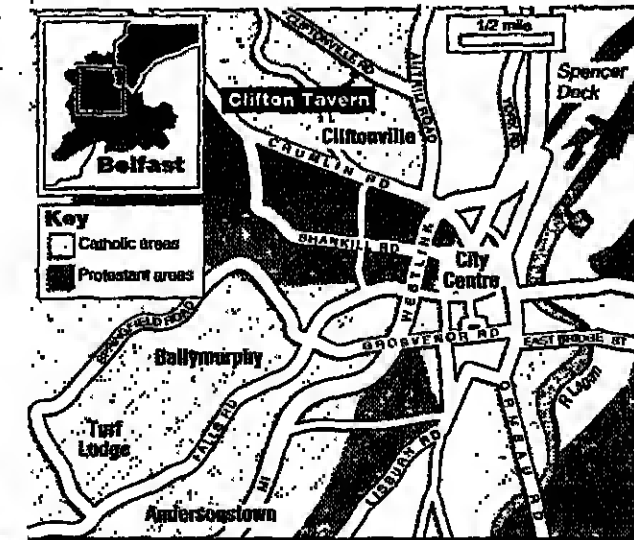
Wednesday night, by luck, was no Greyhound or Loughlin Island, loyalist pub slaughters which claimed 13 victims four years back. No one derived any comfort from that.

In Belfast yesterday, the murder of a decent man as he looked forward to the next 12 months was just as depressing: an awful symbol for what lies in store in 1998.



"There was panic in the bar. Someone shouted out 'there's another one hit', and it was dad"

— Maria Murphy, daughter of Timothy, left



Britons still have hearts for stones

John Ezzard

BOY racers have seen petrol advertised all their lives in litres. But they still boast of the "mpg" their souped-up bangers will do.

Butter has been sold in grams for years. Yet cooks usually talk about pounds. Even children always tell you their height and weight in feet and stones although all they have learned at school is metres and kilos.

This — the British Weights and Measures Association said yesterday — is why a resounding 74

per cent of the British people still prefer imperial quantities.

Yet, on New Year's Day the year after next, criminal sanctions will come into force against most traders who carry on using the old yardsticks.

A survey for the association found that only 19 per cent of the public finds the metric system "more convenient" for everyday purposes.

Eighty-two per cent of women want to keep imperial measures, with 12 per cent in favour of metric. The imperial majority falls to 51 per cent among 15- to

24-year-olds of both sexes, with 48 per cent keen on metric. But in the 35-44 age range it climbs to 79 per cent, with 12 per cent against.

Only 7 per cent back the current move to print packaging and recipes exclusively in metric. Some 21 per cent would prefer imperial only. The majority of 68 per cent wants dual labelling to continue.

These findings from a survey of 1,000 people, some 83 years after Britain adopted a voluntary policy of metrication by persuasion.

Metrication will become

compulsory under a European Union directive on January 1, 2000, with permanent exemptions including distance and speed measurements and the sale of milk and pub beer.

Yesterday Vivien Linacre, by Ezzard, director, said the aim of the survey had been "to test the received wisdom that Britain's customary weights and measures should be abandoned."

"The results show clearly that people don't want this. The result will be bitter resentment against the Government and European Union."

Truant pupils are blamed for wave of street crime

continued from page 1 criminal activity," he said. Mr Blair has asked the unit to produce a report on the problem by Easter. It is not yet clear whether it will recommend piecemeal initiatives or a more co-ordinated strategy across many Whitehall departments.

The Prime Minister said last month that the work of the unit was "one of the most important and defining things" the Government would do.

"Britain cannot be a strong community. It cannot be one nation when there are so many families experiencing a third generation of unemployment, when so many pensioners live on crime-ridden housing estates, are afraid to go out, and when thousands of truant children spend their days hanging around on street corners," he said.

The official exclusion unit is led by Moira Wallace, aged 36, a former economic affairs private secretary to John Major and Mr Blair at No 10. Ministers attached to it include Peter Mandelson, Teresa Jowell, Hilary Armstrong and Alan Michael.

Its brief is to work across the normal boundaries between Whitehall departments and draw support from professionals with experience of working with people excluded from mainstream society by poverty, poor schooling and unemployment.

The Government is already committed to a series of initiatives against juvenile crime and truancy, including Home Office plans for parenting orders and proposals for home-school contracts being prepared by the Department for Education and Employment.

jealousy the basis of the conflict within the Comedian Harmonists. Vilsmair ignores the uglier truth about the group's final years.

Almost as soon as the Nazis came to power, they restricted the Comedian Harmonists' right to perform and put pressure on the group to expel its Jewish members. The three non-Jews realised the group could not survive without the other three but, instead of faring solidarity to their colleagues, they attempted to extort compensation from them for lost earnings.

To have included this unpleasant twist might have shattered Vilsmair's sunny image of the Comedian Harmonists as a group of loyal friends bound together by their love of music. But it would have added bite to a film which, although it is always elegant and often charming, ultimately leaves the viewer feeling unsatisfied and a little short-changed.

Comedians failed to stay in harmony

Review

Denis Staunton

Comedian Harmonists
Berlin

FOR eight years before they were silenced by Hitler in 1935, the Comedian Harmonists were Germany's most successful musicians — a Weimar version of the Beatles. The six-man cappella group delighted millions with their witty, technically perfect arrangements of gently ribald songs such as Veronika, der Lenz ist da! (Veronika, spring is here!) and Mein kleiner grüner Kakadu (My little green cactus) which offered a cheerful escape from the gloomy reality of life in the Depression.

Formed in 1927 when Harry Frommermann, a Berlin drama teacher, placed an ad-

vertisement in a local newspaper, the Comedian Harmonists' rise seemed at first to be unstoppable. But the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 made the demise of the group inevitable because three of its members were Jewish. More than 60 years later, their music remains popular in Germany and the Comedian Harmonists have inspired a documentary film and a number of books. Now Joseph Vilsmair has made the group the subject of a lavishly filmed biopic which has been attracting big audiences in Germany since it opened last week.

Taking his cue from the perfectionism of the original group, Vilsmair is painstaking in his stagings of the songs which take up much of the film. The music is undoubtedly the main attraction but the film takes generous liberties with the facts to create a melodramatic plot based on a love triangle involving two of the group's members.

Ben Becker stars as Bob Biberi, the bass who also ran the group's business affairs, with Ulrich Noethen as Frommermann, the musical genius behind the Comedian Harmonists. Both are in love with Erna, who works in a Jewish music shop and has long served as Frommermann's muse. Erna's choice between the Jewish Frommermann and the non-Jewish Biberi is made against a backdrop of Nazi thuggery on the streets and Hitler's roaring on the radio.

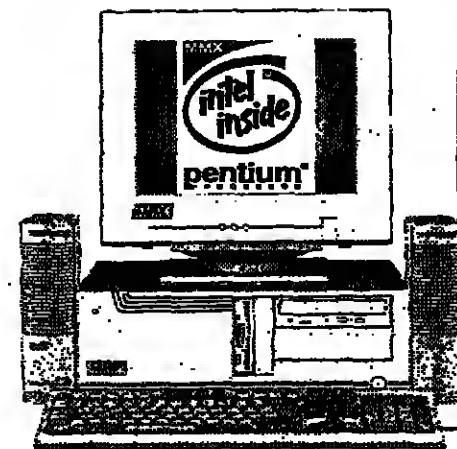
Vilsmair has been criticised in the past, notably following his 1999 film Stalingrad, for reducing the political to the personal and using the Holocaust as no more than a background for private dramas. It is perhaps unfair to criticise a film-maker for mixing fact with fiction or for highlighting the individual fate of his characters at the expense of the political context. But in making sexual

jealousy the basis of the conflict within the Comedian Harmonists, Vilsmair ignores the uglier truth about the group's final years.

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مكتبة القرآن

A doomed dynasty



JOE KENNEDY: The patriarch, amassed one of the largest private fortunes of the 1920s and was appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt ambassador to London. His own political ambitions were thwarted by his calls to appease Hitler. According to Seymour Hersh's recent book *The Dark Side of Camelot*, he was heavily involved with the mafia and bought his son John F. Kennedy votes.



ROSE KENNEDY: The Kennedy matriarch, who used to appear on a regular television show called *Coffee with the Kennedys*, sharing her recipe for how to build a strong, healthy and happy family life.



DAVID KENNEDY: Michael's older brother, who as a young teenager secured his place in America's affection by helping carry his father's coffin into St Patrick's Cathedral, was found alone in a Palm Beach hotel room, dead from a heroin overdose, in 1984. He was 29.



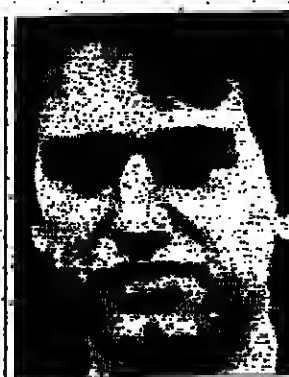
WILLIAM KENNEDY SMITH: Nephew of JFK, was accused in 1991 of raping a girl he had met in a local bar, at the family's Palm Beach estate. After a high-profile trial that focused America's attention on the varying degrees of date rape and infuriated feminists, he was acquitted.



EDWARD KENNEDY: The senator, sole surviving son of Rose and Joe Senior, abandoned his dream of following his brothers into the White House in 1969 when he crashed his car on Chappaquiddick Island and left his drowned companion, Mary Jo Kopechne, in the water for eight hours before calling police. His own son Edward lost his leg to cancer at the age of 12.



JOSEPH KENNEDY II: Claimed he was pulling out of the race for the governorship of Massachusetts because of his brother Michael's scandal. But he was equally damaged when his ex-wife Sheila Rauch published a book last year portraying him as a narcissistic bully. She was furious when he succeeded in getting their 12-year marriage annulled on the grounds that he had exercised a "lack of due discretion" in marrying her.



ROBERT KENNEDY JNR: Known as RFK Jr, found in possession of cannabis and gave credence to the belief that addiction is often a family problem. He told the Press: "I feel that in many ways I was born an alcoholic." At one point it was thought that up to nine members of the Kennedy clan were in Alcoholics Anonymous at the same time.



JOHN F. KENNEDY JNR: Michael's cousin. Poster boy for good behaviour and Princess Diana's favoured model for how Prince William should deal with the Press. Successfully runs George, a political monthly he founded. But recent sightings of him with his arm in a sling prompted reports that he had been fighting with his new wife, Carolyn.

Tragedy strikes Kennedys again

Michael dies at 39 in holiday skiing accident

Joanna Coles in New York

AMERICA'S first family, plagued by scandal and sudden deaths, ended the year with yet more tragedy when Michael Kennedy, the 39-year-old son of Bobby Kennedy and once thought to be the family's next political hope, died on New Year's Eve in a skiing accident in Aspen, Colorado.

A highly skilled and experienced skier, he was playing the family's own brand of football-on-skiis, with a packed bottle of snow for the ball, when he made a pass and ran headlong into a tree. Witnesses said he was skiing very fast, but conditions were good and the emergency ski patrol responded to a call within four minutes.

His sister Rory immediately gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and, according to a witness, the rest of the party gathered round him and began saying the Lord's Prayer. Kennedy was pronounced dead at 8:50pm.

An autopsy revealed that he died of head and neck injuries. The body was taken to Massachusetts yesterday for burial.

His brother, Joseph Kennedy II, said: "Michael's death is a terrible tragedy for his three children, his wife, Vicki, and his entire family. We will miss him dearly."

His uncle, Senator Edward Kennedy, the family patriarch, said he was "heartbroken". "We loved him and we will miss him very much."

This is the latest in a string of untimely deaths to visit the once apparently golden fam-

ily, and Michael is the second of the 11 children born to Bobby and his wife Ethel to die in unexpected circumstances. His older brother David died in Florida in 1984 of a drug overdose, aged 29.

Their father was assassinated in 1968 and their uncle, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in 1963. Another uncle, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr, died in a plane crash during the second world war, and an aunt, Kathleen Kennedy, also died in a plane crash.

Armed with the famous Kennedy smile and charm, Michael was once regarded as the rising star among the younger, more boisterous Kennedys — with whom, he once joked, it was easier to arrange an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting than a football team.

But like his Uncle Ted — whose own hopes of high office were dashed by a drunken car accident at Chappaquiddick — Michael's hopes of entering politics seriously were ruined when his affair with his children's teenage babysitter became public.

His wife Victoria came home one afternoon in 1996 and found him and the sitter, the daughter of their close friends Paul and June Verrochi, in bed together. Though she agreed to keep the affair a secret provided it ended, the relationship continued, eventually becoming public last April.

When it became clear that the affair began when the girl was just 14, the police threatened to charge Kennedy with statutory rape. But the girl, now a Boston University student, refused to co-operate and the threat was eventually



Michael Kennedy, right, with his wife Vicki, cousin Robert Kennedy Jr and his wife Mary

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARA KAPLAN

dropped. The affair finally came to an end when her parents — wealthy donors to the Democratic Party — found out and forbade her to see him again.

The incident had a ripple effect across family waters. Kennedy's wife — whose father, the sportscaster Frank Gifford, was also exposed as an adulterer — left him, and his brother Joseph, widely expected to announce his candidacy as governor for Massachusetts, pulled out, saying that media interest in the scandal would undermine his campaign.

Michael's death may now free Joseph Kennedy II to reconsider running for higher office.

Just as the scandal seemed to be dying down, it was revived in September by Mi-

chael's cousin John F. Kennedy Jr, editor of *George* magazine, who lambasted both Michael and their cousin William Kennedy Smith — accused of rape 1991 — as "poster-boys for bad behaviour".

As the split in the once-tight family became apparent, Michael retaliated by accusing John of using his misfortune to promote his publication.

"Ask not what I can do for my cousin but what I can do for his magazine," he snapped. But in a statement after the statutory rape investigation was dropped, there were signs that Michael was anxious to make amends.

"I deeply apologise for the pain I have caused," he said. "I intend to do all I can to make up for the mistakes and to obtain the help I need."

Labour gives grassroots a voice

Forums hand policy-making power to ordinary members

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

THE Labour leadership is to hand policy-making power to ordinary card-carrying members of the party in an attempt to broaden participation of the grassroots as part of the next stage of internal reforms.

Forty-five policy forums are to be set up in which members will be invited to express their views on every aspect of policy, from social issues to local government.

The party leadership hopes this "one member, one voice" initiative will counter accusations that Labour is becoming over-centralised, with Millbank Tower calling all the shots and ordinary members being left disillusioned and with little influence.

The reforms have been recommended by the "healthy party task force" which was set up by Labour's ruling national executive and is headed by Ian McCartney, the trade and industry minister. Tony Blair has given his blessing to the changes.

The first of the policy forums, in which all members can participate, either through attendance or written submissions, will be set up by the end of the month. Members will discuss anything from inward investment, tourism and crime policies to the performance of their local council. A further 44 policy forums will follow throughout the UK. The results will eventually work through to the annual party conference.

A Labour source loyal to the leadership said: "By 2000

we will have in practice not just one member, one vote, but one member, one voice."

But a Labour leftwinger opposed to Mr Blair dismissed the changes as cosmetic and claimed they would fail to address the problem of disillusionment sweeping the party.

Labour claims membership has increased substantially over the past few years to 405,000 but party sources insist the true picture is that many members have left over the past few months and that the party inflated membership figures by including many people who merely sent donations in the run-up to the May 1 election.

The party has undergone fundamental changes this decade, from the introduction of "one member, one vote" for the election of the leadership and approval of the manifesto through to a tightening of discipline and greater control by headquarters over the annual conference.

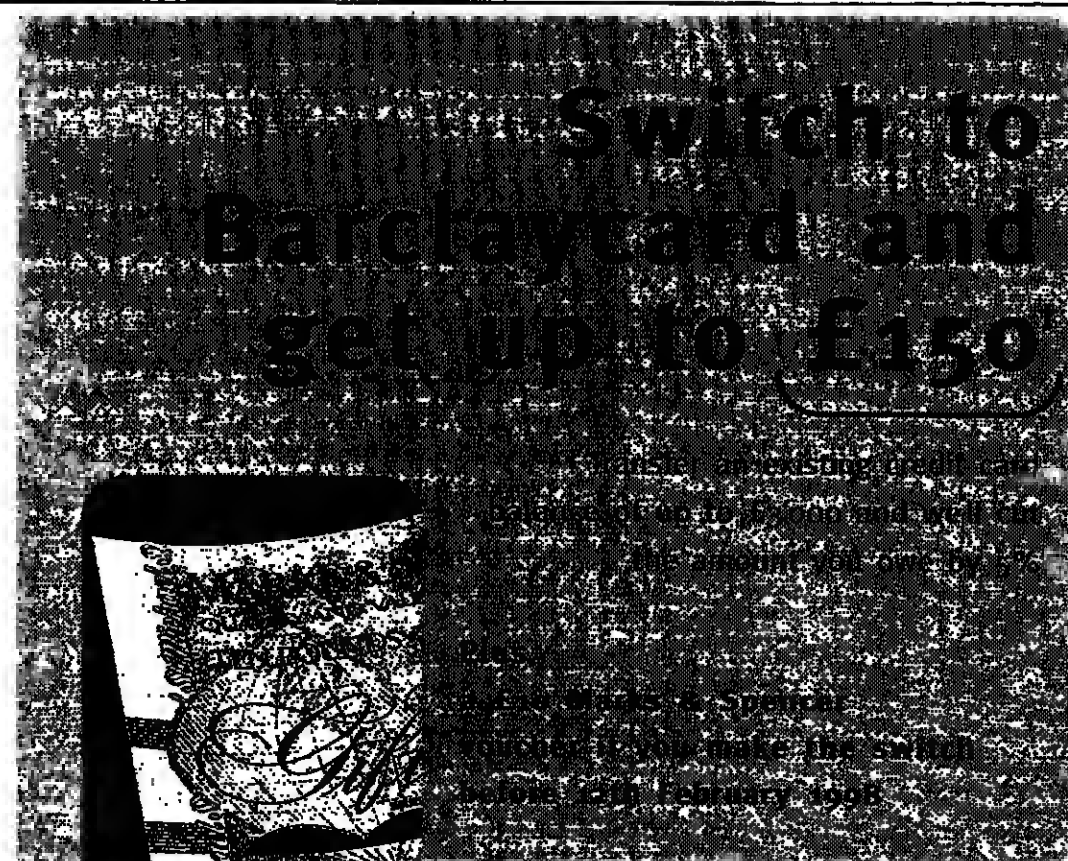
The policy forums to some extent are a quid pro quo for the loss of influence among the grassroots at the party conference.

Although members will be able to discuss policy, it remains to be seen how much attention the leadership will pay.

As well as the policy forums, the healthy party task force has recommended that the key seats strategy, in which intensive work was put into marginal constituencies, should be extended to heart-land seats.

The setting up of the task force followed a conference debate on internal reform.

Mr McCartney, who has campaigned for party reform but who is a traditionalist close to the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, went round the country talking to party officials and members. Twelve pilot schemes tested the policy forum idea. According to Labour, 3,000 members participated.



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"People expect me to be Sporty Spice or some big butch...whatever. Why can't people just look at what I've achieved? ... I'm not a woman manager; I'm a manager who happens to be female.

Twenty nine-year-old boxing manager Tania Follett

Sport98 page 6

مكتبة من الأصيل

Tanker hits rocks in gale

Geoffrey Gibbs
and Lucy Patton

COASTGUARDS were co-ordinating a rescue and anti-pollution operation last night after a Panamanian-registered oil tanker with a crew of 29 ran aground in a gale off the south Devon coast.

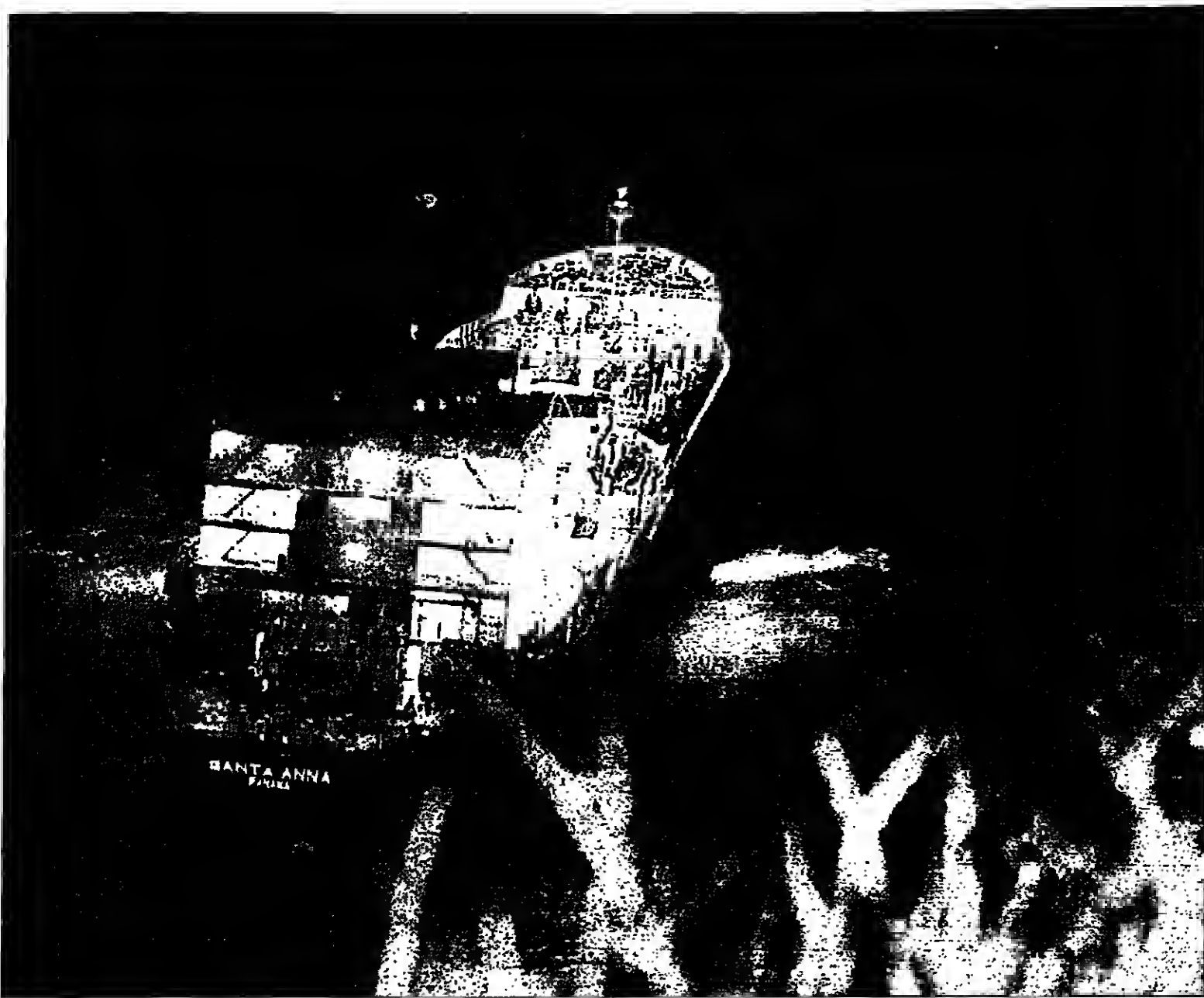
The 22,000-tonne Santa Anna was reported to be holed in three places after dragging her anchor and grounding on Thatcher Rock near Torquay.

Although the tanker was in ballast with only clean water in the cargo holds, marine experts were concerned about pollution from the 280 tonnes of fuel oil on board. Engineers were pumping the fuel into tanks away from the outer skin of the vessel.

The high winds brought chaos on roads across the West Country, bringing down trees and power lines and leaving about 5,000 people without electricity. Motoring organisations described conditions as hazardous with debris and surface water on many minor roads and heavy flooding on the A30 trunk road at Honiton.

The Severn crossing linking England and Wales, and the Q&R bridge at Dartford, Kent, were closed.

A Met Office spokesman said last night that the wet and windy weather was set to continue over the weekend, with the North and West facing the worst.



The 22,000-tonne Santa Anna, a Panamanian-registered oil tanker, held fast on rocks off the south Devon coast

PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL SLATER

Britain 'is spying' on EU partners

Michael White
Political editor

BITAIN'S overseas intelligence service, MI6, spies on European Union allies as a means of improving Whitehall's negotiating position in Brussels, a television documentary will suggest on Sunday.

The clearest confirmation from authoritative sources of a long-held suspicion comes in BBC 2's How To Be Foreign Secretary, in which successive holders of the office are interviewed about the post-imperial challenges of the job.

In the most significant exchange about whether or not MI6 deploys its espionage resources across the Channel, reporter Michael Cockerell asks the former Labour foreign secretary, David Owen, directly if such things happen. "A bit, I actually had a difference of opinion on this. These are our friends and allies. You have to make a distinction, they are no longer opponents and I think you have to be very careful about having intelligence within the framework of the European Union," Lord Owen went on to be a EU Bosnia negotiator in the 1990s.

Asked if he meant that MI6 should not conduct such operations, Lord Owen replies: "Yes, I did. It's a different relationship. I am not necessarily saying you turn a deaf ear, but there are different techniques, different things you do."

When more recent foreign secretaries, including Labour's latest incumbent, Robin Cook, are asked the same question, they clam up.

"I don't want to go into that," says Lord Hurd. Mr Cook says: "No, I am sorry I cannot talk about that... because its secret information." But a former ambassador, Sir David Renwick, now Lord Renwick, hints that the practice still goes on and that the French at least almost certainly do the same to us.

The programme reviews Mr Cook's efforts to open up the gilded but stuffy corridors of the Foreign Office to people from all backgrounds and to put into practice Labour's proclaimed ethical foreign policy.

It reveals that a letter on the subject was almost sent out with the word "bollocks" inserted in the middle by an unidentified civil servant. Mr Cook himself spotted it at the last minute.

The Foreign Secretary's problems during the Queen's tour of India and Pakistan allowed his predecessor, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, to get in a dig about off-the-record remarks on Kashmir which caused a row.

"I believe that Robin will now realise that what you say in private in diplomacy is sometimes as important as what you say in public."

Most foreign secretaries complain about the constant travelling and the difficulties of staying awake. They are also critical of EU procedures.

Some say that lunch is the most effective forum for negotiation in Brussels but Lord Howe, Margaret Thatcher's long-suffering foreign secretary from 1983 to 1989, explains that in Europe "diplomacy is inseparable from gastronomy" and that some EU statesmen believe that "if you are not eating at the same time you are not sincere".

Lord Hurd complains that British foreign secretaries are regarded as weak and compromising figures, eager to sell out British interests, when at home.

But as soon as they arrive in Brussels they are seen as "better briefed, devious and ruthless in the pursuit of British interests".

In search of spies, page 13



Lord Owen: 'care needed about EU intelligence work'

Police question man over headless body of teenager

David Ward

POLICE investigating the death of a teenager whose headless corpse was found in a bin behind a hotel in Blackpool continued yesterday to question a man arrested in Greater Manchester.

Detective Superintendent Paul Buschini, of Lancashire police, said the man, 23, from Salford, would be asked about the death and other matters. "But as far as I am concerned the inquiry to trace the person responsible for disposing of this body is still continuing."

House to house inquiries would continue in Blackpool. The body of Christopher Hartley, 17, was found on Tuesday afternoon in a sports bag. His head has not been found and a post mortem failed to reveal how he died.

Mr Buschini said it was vital to trace the head to establish the cause of death and a possible motive. "Some tests were carried out yesterday and others will be made today."

Hartley, from Burnley, Lancashire, moved to Blackpool eight months ago to look for work.

Police have traced several people who employed him and hope to speak to some of his friends and associates to discover his last movements.

They have still not spoken to a girlfriend he was believed to have had in Blackpool.

Mr Buschini said he had found no evidence to suggest that Hartley had been involved with drugs.

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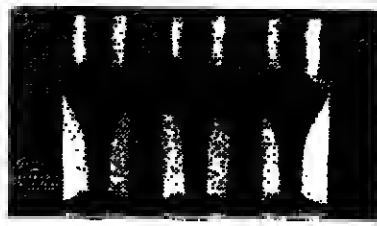
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سكانو العرب

Alarm over computer chaos and recession danger

Blair leads action on millennium bug

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

TONY Blair is to head a Downing Street task force to try to avert British business from the dangers of the "millennium bug", the problem posed by computers unable to cope with changes to 2000.

He is alarmed by reports that over 50 per cent of companies have not yet acted to prevent computer breakdowns and that the ensuing chaos could trip a recession.

Downing Street yesterday described the response of business, in particular small and medium-sized ones, as inadequate. "The millennium bug will drive companies crazy in 2000."

But no one knows for sure

what will happen on January 1, 2000. Some estimates have put the cost of solving the problem at £400 billion worldwide.

It has been caused by programmers putting in only two digits for the year — 1998 will show only as 98 in many computers. This was partly out of an assumption that their programs would not last beyond

'The millennium bug will drive companies crazy in 2000'

the end of the century and partly to cut corners.

With only two digits, 2000 will come up as 00 and the fear is that some computers will simply close themselves down, deleting all files.

Downing Street hopes the involvement of the Prime Minister will raise the prominence of the issue and "provide a wake-up call" for British and European Union

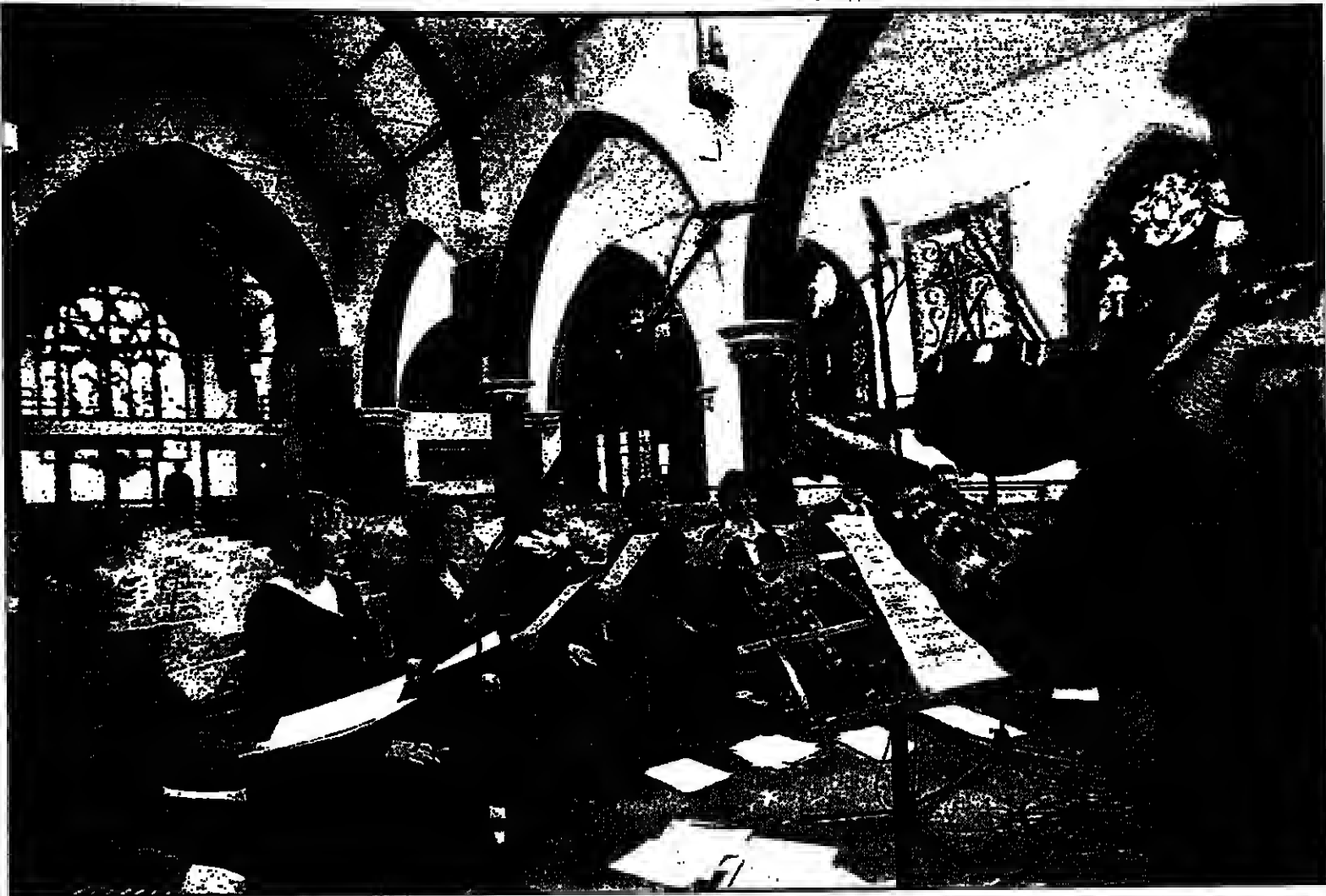
businesses. He will use the EU presidency, which Britain assumed for six months yesterday, to raise the issue at meetings in Brussels and at the Group of Eight meeting of leading industrialised countries, which Britain will also chair.

The Downing Street spokesman said it would be too late to address the problem in 1998 and companies had to begin testing their computers this year.

It was relatively simple and would not cost much.

Alarm in the Government was increased by a consultant's report showing only 50 per cent of companies were aware of the problem. This was reinforced by a warning from an economist to a US senate hearing that there was a 40 per cent chance that the computer chaos could lead to a recession comparable to the one that followed the 1970s oil crisis.

"Lots of big businesses are taking action but lots of smaller ones are not and that could have a knock-on effect," the Downing Street spokesman said.



BBC Radio 4's Daily Service goes out live, but with a 90-minute rehearsal, above, beforehand at Emmanuel Church, Manchester. PHOTOGRAPH BY DON MUIR

BBC celebrates 70 years of daily service on radio

David Ward reveals how morning 'God slot' inspires its 500,000 listeners

EVERY day when he is on the road, a salesman stops in a convenient layby just before 10am and tunes in to BBC Radio 4 on long wave.

He composes himself during the news summary and then listens to the Daily Service, 13 minutes of hymns, bible readings and prayers broadcast from a church in the Manchester suburb of Didsbury.

Today is the service's 70th birthday — making it the longest running daily radio programme in the history of broadcasting (Choral Evensong, on Radio 3, has a year's seniority, but is only once a week).

This morning the salesman will join 500,000 others (including a woman listening on earphones in her office, and many old people living alone) for a special edition of the programme, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The salesman, like many regulars, writes to Ernest Rea, head of BBC Religion, to offer thanks for the live broadcasts. "I don't suppose that you can ever know how many people you reach," said another listener, "but you reach the people that the Church and clergy do not. Keep up the good work."

This need is recognised by producers and presenters. "There are people for whom the inside of a church is an alien place," said Mr Rea. "They can sit in their own room and get the same experience."

The service is one of the

last legacies of Lord Reith, the BBC's first director general, who was impressed by a Miss K M Cordoux from Watford writing to the Radio Times in 1926 to ask for a wireless service. "How many are there who listen in who long to hear something daily of God and His love?" she asked.

Because of the General Strike, few copies of that edition of Radio Times were distributed. But with the intervention of Lord Reith the letter was republished in 1927.

The first broadcast went out on January 2, 1928, and was warmly welcomed. Having had its own studio in Broadcasting House in London, the programme arrived at Emmanuel Church in Manchester in 1993.

Many of the programme's singers are students at the Royal Northern College of Music. "You wouldn't want to do this if you were not a Christian," said Miranda McDonnell, a soprano knocking back mulled wine after singing an Epiphany carol. "We perform a huge range of music, from Palestrina to modern hymns and jazz arrangements."

Presenters must remember they are not in a pulpit. "It's the intimacy which is vital," said Stephen Shipley, one of the team of 30. "I talk to one person, someone almost certainly alone."

The programme's future seems secure. James Boyle, Radio 4's controller, acknowledges that it "touches the deepest traditions of this country".

Mr Rea added: "As long as there is a demand for it, it will survive."

What he would have loved for Christmas would have been a return to VHF. "I don't think it's going to happen — but we have to be grateful that we are still there in these secular days."

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Giant cartoon characters floated over the heads of more than 6,000 entertainers who took part in a parade through London yesterday to celebrate the new year. PHOTOGRAPH BY BEN CURTIS

New year joy ends in tragedy on track

Reveller falls under train, and couple leaving pub hit by car.

Ruaridh Nicoll

FOR MOST it was a celebration. For the emergency services it was business as usual, only more so. And for some, New Year's Eve was a tragedy.

A minute into 1998, James O'Shea, a 19-year-old student, was run over by an express train and lost both his legs. As the clock had struck midnight, he had apparently begun dancing around with a friend on the platform at Milton Keynes station in Buckinghamshire. Suddenly they both slipped and fell on the rails, just as the Intercity from Birmingham to Euston



Lisa Wood: died when hit by car on leaving pub at 1.20am. The friend made it off the lines, but could only watch as James lost one leg just below the waist. The other was amputated later at Milton Keynes general hospital. His parents were by his bedside last night.

An hour and 20 minutes later, Lisa Woodroom, aged 21, was leaving the Red Lion pub in Woodcote, Oxfordshire, with her fiancé, Darren Stevens, aged 23. A Lancia Delta collided with another car, spun out of control, and hit the couple.

In an scene police described as "carriage", Ms Woodroom was killed. She had spent the night slipping orange juice. Mr Stevens was dragged along the wall of the pub by the car and suffered head injuries. Yesterday he was reported to be stable in the Royal Berkshire hospital with head injuries.

After the accident the driver surrendered himself and was arrested when found to be twice over the limit. On Merseyside, a 22-year-old man, as yet unnamed, was killed while crossing the street by a police dog van on its way to an alarm call in St Helens. He was given emergency aid by the van's crew, but died later from head injuries.

In a statement police said that the vehicle had its blue lights flashing and its sirens on.

Mersey ambulance service reported its busiest-ever new year. The night shift dealt with 898 calls, including 120 between 1am and 2am — the most ever in an hour. The calls included 134 assaults, 80 falls and 28 traffic accidents. However, Peter Hanton, head of emergency and paramedic services, said: "The numbers of 999 calls during the early hours were excessive and obviously many were drink-related — delays in response were the inevitable result. This has been an exhausting and disappointing night for us all."

In Yorkshire, Stuart Low was killed as he and friends walked home along the A19 near Easingwold. They watched in horror as he stepped off the grass verge and was hit by two taxis travelling in opposite directions. In Basildon, Essex, Tina

Thorne was killed as she stepped out of her Toyota just after 1am. The car that hit her is believed by police to be a dark new-style Ford Escort; it did not stop.

In Brighton, East Sussex, police faced a mob when they tried to close down one of three illegal raves. They were pelted with bottles, and one reveller kicked a police dog and attacked its handler. "It's not exactly the nicest way to see the new year in," said Inspector Neil Smith.

A tragedy was averted when three men saved Christine Winship, aged 45, from her burning house in Hartlepool, Teesside. She had thrown a party, and police suspect a cigarette was left smouldering in a sofa when she went to bed. A neighbour, Ian Nicholson, aged 11, raised the alarm.

Another celebration ended in tragedy when a man died and two others were injured in a house fire in Woking, Surrey, at around 9am yesterday. A family of three and another guest in the house escaped.

On the Yorkshire moors, Robert Burbridge, aged 24, left the Lion Inn in Blakey to try to get better reception on his mobile phone. When he did not return, rescue parties scoured the moors throughout the night. He was finally found 10 miles away when he answered his phone. He had fallen asleep in the open. "He is a very lucky man," a policeman said.

In London, 80,000 partied in Trafalgar Square while thousands more watched fireworks at Tower Bridge.

In Scotland, 200,000 gathered in Edinburgh's city centre, while thousands poured into Glasgow's George Square. In Manchester, the ambulance service received a record 750 calls. The emergency services had to deal with seven stabbings and three shootings, although there were no serious injuries.

News in brief

Ku Klux Klan man found hanged

A FORMER Ku Klux Klan leader was found by police dangling from a rope in the loft of his house in Calcott, Berkshire, after a friend could get no answer at his door on New Year's Eve. Yesterday a detective said that it was not believed that the death of Andrew Frain, aged 32, was anything other than suicide. However, Frain's legal representatives had asked for an investigation, and there would be a post mortem and inquest.

In 1986 Frain was jailed for six months at Reading crown court for possessing racially inflammatory material with a view to stirring up racial hatred.

The court was told that Frain had been found with 800 Ku Klux Klan recruiting leaflets, included slogans such as "Sick of your child being taught Paki behaviour". The court was also told police had found a picture of Frain in Klan robes, and he had admitted having been a member and having held the senior title of Grand Knight Hawk.

Murderer recaptured

A CONVICTED murderer was recaptured yesterday after being the 10th prisoner to abscond from Leyhill open prison in Gloucestershire in 1997.

Anthony Lucas, aged 48, was "noticed as missing" on New Year's Eve. He had been due for his regular work placement outside the prison in the morning but telephoned his employers to say that he could not make it.

Police arrested him in Wellington, Somerset, after tracing him via a phone call.

Lucas, from London, was convicted of murdering his common-law wife and sentenced to life in 1988. In 1995 he was classed as a category D prisoner and moved to Leyhill.

A Prison Service spokesman said: "He has been working outside the prison for over a year without any previous incident. We refer to his absence as absconding rather than an escape as there are no significant physical barriers to the prison." He would now go to a closed prison, the spokesman added.

Leyhill was opened in 1996 and was the first official minimum security prison. Since 1988, 25 prisoners have absconded and have not been recaptured; seven are thought to be killers. The prison provides keys to prisoners' rooms for privacy and has a collection of 31 Picasso etchings worth £20,000 presented by a former inmate, Leslie Grantham, the ex-EastEnders actor.

Girls 'forced to lose virginity'

A STUDY in New Zealand has found that 7 per cent of women report that they were "forced" to lose their virginity. Of 477 men and 458 women born between 1972 and 1973, only one man said force was used on him.

The average age for loss of virginity was 17 for men and 16 for women; the younger the girls were, the more likely it was that coercion was involved.

For both sexes the most common reason for sex was being "curious about what it would be like". And one in 10 reported being "a bit drunk".

Fewer men than women gave the main reason for having first sex as being "in love" or carried away with their feelings, and more men than women said they "wanted to lose their virginity".

The New Zealand study, reported in the British Medical Journal, found that 77 per cent of men reported that they and their partners were "equally willing", but this was the view of only 53 per cent of women.

In the UK the average age for first intercourse is reported as being 17 for both sexes. Being forced to have sex for the first time is reported by 2 per cent of women in the UK, and by 4 per cent in the United States.

Call for fairness in schools

TEACHING UNIONS in England and Scotland yesterday called for a Europe-wide campaign against a chronic failure to give a fair share of education resources to the children in most need.

The National Union of Teachers and the Educational Institute of Scotland published research by the management consultants, Coopers and Lybrand, showing "near universal dissatisfaction" across 21 European countries with the shortage of funds for schools in poorer areas where children are most educationally disadvantaged.

Across all areas, pupils with special individual needs did not get adequate support in every country except Finland.

The unions want Britain to use its six-month presidency of the European Union to take the lead. The report found that the share of public spending devoted to education declined in most EU countries from 1985 to 1992; that primaries were losing out to secondaries in allocation of resources; and that Britain's percentage of spending on pre-school education was the second lowest in Europe after Portugal. — John Carvel

Princes left in peace

PRINCES William and Harry waved sparklers while watching a fireworks display on New Year's Eve while holidaying with their father in Klosters in the Swiss Alps.

Also enjoying the fireworks were 16-year-old Zara Phillips, daughter of the Princess Royal, and the former royal nanny, Tiggy Legge-Bourke.

Yesterday, when the princes went skiing, there were no photographers or reporters to be seen. "They enjoyed a completely media-free day," said a royal aide. Referring to the appeal for privacy following death of the boys' mother, he added: "The last few months have been quite remarkable."

In return for an otherwise private holiday, the party will pose for the cameras today.

Drugs used in party death

A YOUTH aged 18 had taken drugs before collapsing at a party and dying in hospital, a post mortem has found. However, the exact cause of death will require further tests by the pathologist.

William McLean from Fairhill, Strathclyde, died on Wednesday after collapsing at the party in a house in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. Police were called to the house and arrested a 21-year-old man, who has been released on police bail pending further inquiries.

Lakeland weather divined by duo's daily trek to peak

Peter Hetherington

DOWN in the Lakeland valleys, the weather appeared mild and bright yesterday. But the forecast for higher up signalled potential danger for new year fell walkers: showers, with hail, snow above 2,000ft, near-freezing temperatures — and fog at times.

This winter season, though, visitors can be sure that the forecast is more accurate than ever, thanks to a daily bulletin

supplied by two weather assessors — one of whom scales Helvellyn each day.

En route to the 3,113ft summit of England's third-highest peak, Richard Fox and Graham Restarick gather data on the conditions, then feed it to the Lake District's Weatherline service which can be a lifeline to mountaineers.

Whatever the weather, they are contracted to climb Helvellyn seven days a week, at a rate of £5.52 an hour. "It would have to be very bad for them not to go up," said Marion Green, of



Come rain or shine... Lakeland's Weatherline assessor Graham Restarick high in the fells, with Helvellyn's 3,113ft summit looming behind. PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY WHEATHEAD

the National Park Authority. "but we wouldn't want them to do anything life-threatening."

On a good day Mr Fox or Mr Restarick will cover the 3½ miles to the summit in 55 minutes, although the average time is half an hour longer.

Mr Fox, 33, a much-travelled mountain expedition leader, said: "The problem with Helvellyn is that you can't see the summit from

the bottom, so people often have no idea about conditions on top. We can give them a bit of warning so they will know whether to wear crampons, and carry an ice axe, for example."

Helvellyn, an easterly peak, was chosen as Lakeland's weather vane because it often offers more extreme conditions than the westerly Scafell Pike — England's highest peak — which is nearer the sea.

In spite of the well-publicised Weatherline service, the assessors can still recount lurid tales of the ill-equipped taking to the hills. But in case someone encounters difficulty the two — who each work seven days on, seven days off — carry 35lb packs of safety and survival gear.

Despite its tickle weather, though, Lakeland still lures around 12 million visitors a year — and almost 3 million of them take to the hills.

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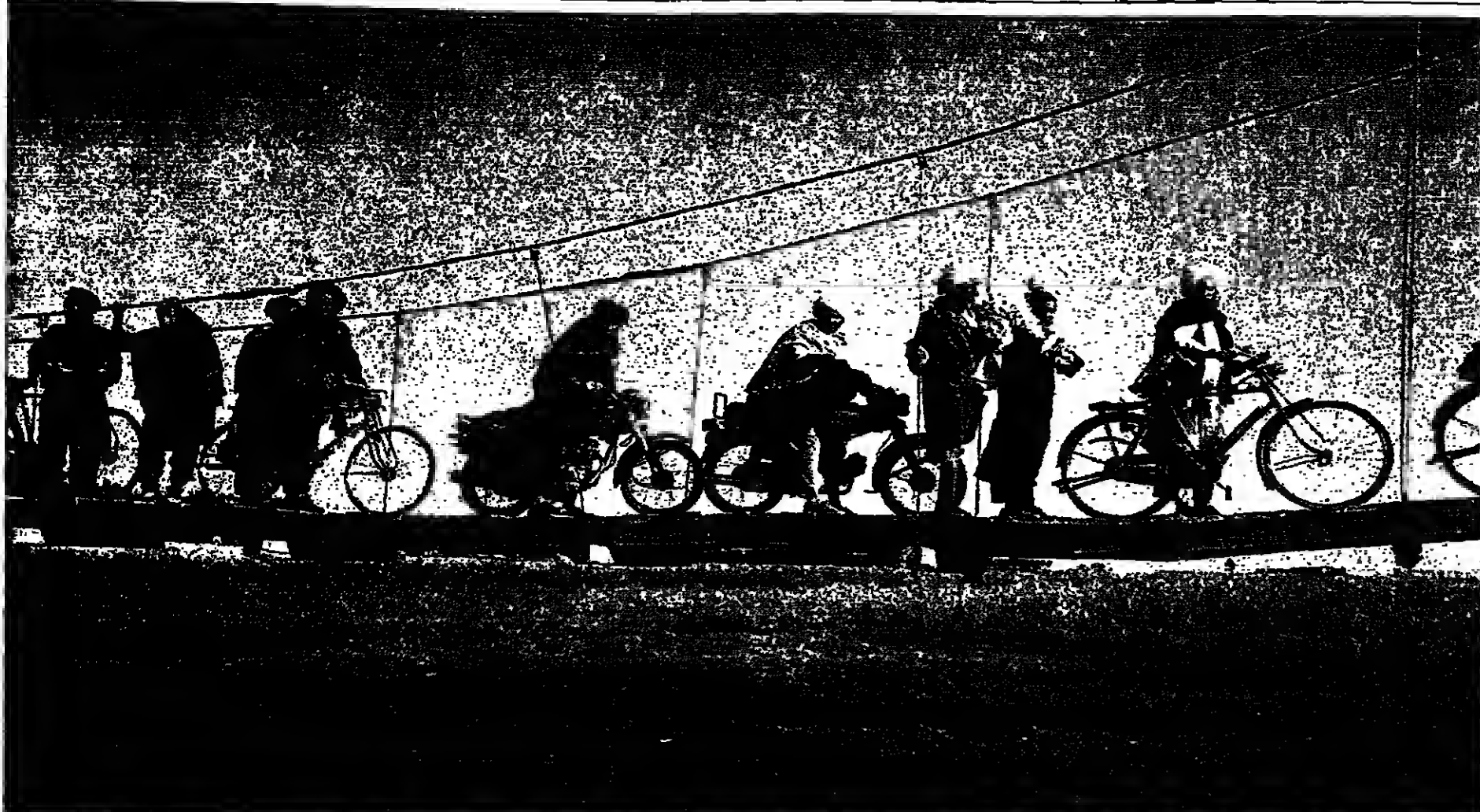
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What can we do for you?

مكتبة الصالح



The chaos of war in Afghanistan has allowed traders travelling by bicycle, motorcycle or lorry to carry heroin to Iran and Turkmenistan, on route to Europe PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN STEELE

High noon in opium valley

Jonathan Steele in Timergara reports on a paramilitary mission to wipe out the drug crop in Pakistan's no-go ravines

THE battle to cut supplies of heroin to western Europe has moved into the last no-go areas of Pakistan, with paramilitary troops fanning out against some of the world's most heavily armed farmers of opium poppy.

A search-and-destroy campaign is targeting narrow ravines in North West Frontier Province which the police have previously been unable to enter. Foreign aid workers have been warned not to use the road across the valley floor along the Panjkora river for fear of hostage-taking.

The flood of weapons into the region during the Soviet occupation of neighbouring Afghanistan means farmers now possess machine guns, rocket-launchers and even Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. "These are rough and tough

hills, which are unapproachable and inaccessible," said Qazi Mohammed Yusuf, the district commissioner, as he sat in his office in Timergara, the capital of Dir district, Pakistan's largest poppy-growing region.

The use of force in the Nihag valley, the last no-go area in Dir, is being co-ordinated with the United Nations Drugs Control Programme (UNDCP). The programme's new chief, Pino Arlacchi, is a former Italian anti-Mafia adviser. He visited Afghanistan recently to urge the Taliban authorities to move against their own opium producers, and continued on to Peshawar, the main city in Pakistan's North-West Frontier province.

The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is virtually open, and people on both sides are ethnically identical, although they are known as Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pathans in Pakistan. For the first time UN officials are pressing for simultaneous action on drugs in both countries. They want to prevent the "balloon effect", under which a clampdown on poppy-growing in one area encourages it in another.

In Dir, where the planting season has just started, the effects of a possible reduction in Afghanistan's opium harvest are already visible. "Traders have been talking up the price, and we have evidence that more farmers are planting opium than last year," said Simon Gillett, the UNDCP's senior technical adviser in Dir.

Even in valleys where poppy-growing has been eliminated for several years, farmers admit they are tempted to start again.

Alongside the Pakistan government's use of force, the UN drug programme offers a set of economic incentives to end poppy cultivation. The original aim was to



persuade farmers to grow alternative crops, but officials realised that opium-producing areas needed more than that. There had to be a programme of sustainable development, including tarred roads, irrigation, electricity, credit and training if farmers were to be weaned off poppy cultivation.

A man can easily carry a sack of opium gum down a mountain-side on his back. To

reach the market and make the same profit from heavier crops, like onions or tomatoes, a farmer needs a tarred road and a pick-up truck.

Pakistan and Afghanistan became Asia's top opium producers in the late 1970s, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of the mujahedin, who used opium-growing to help finance the war. Difficulties in transporting opium prompted traders and smugglers to set up laboratories in the border areas to process heroin, which is lighter and more valuable.

"You need a critical mass of farmers to give up, if you want to turn the tide in an area," said Mr Gillett. But, in the narrow, snow-capped Nihag valley, the critical mass is still pro-poppy. Village elders have intimidated farmers with the threat of having their houses burnt down if they do not plant the poppy.

In most of Pakistan the campaign against the poppy has been remarkably successful, with production dropping from 800 tonnes in 1990 to 24 tonnes this year.

Across the border in Afghanistan, the chaos of war, sustained European demand for heroin and the ease with which smugglers can carry it by lorry, camel or pick-up truck to Iran and Turkmenistan have led to a steep rise in production. Where the Taliban has restored peace, production has continued to increase, reaching 2,804 tonnes this year, against 400 tonnes in 1990. Afghanistan has become the world's biggest producer of opium.

Mr Arlacchi hopes to export the anti-poppy strategy used in Pakistan to Afghanistan. The Taliban authorities have said the production of opium runs counter to Islam, but they will try to stop it only if the outside world helps farmers grow alternative crops.

Whether or not the Taliban rulers have understood that they cannot get aid without doing some enforcement, the Pakistanis have. The use of paramilitary troops in Dir is meant to impress foreign governments as much as the wild highlanders of Nihag.

Moderate victory as man in a dress hits Iran's screens

Douglas Jehl reports from Isfahan where Islamic radicals have been thwarted, for once, by the rule of law

THE local cinema can finally boast "Snowman in Isfahan" — at the same time as in Tehran.

Because it depicts a man who dresses as a woman (as a ruse to obtain a visa to the United States), the Iranian-made film was until recently banned across the country as anti-Islamic. But after Mohammed Khatami, who espouses cultural openness, was elected president in May, that decision was reversed.

But while Snowman opened in Tehran in November, initial attempts to extend the experiment to Isfahan, a provincial capital known for its exquisite blue-tiled mosques and entrenched revolutionary sentiments, ran into a backlash.

On the day the film was to open, bearded radicals attacked the theatre. They shredded posters and attacked filmgoers. And by all accounts, local security forces did nothing to stop them, even when the radicals returned in the following days to perform triumphant prayers before the closed cinema.

Not until the city's leading cleric made use of a recent sermon to censure the security forces for failing to do their jobs did the balance of power shift, opening the screen to what the new government sees as an important test of conservatives' willingness to accept small steps towards moderation.

"If the police and intelligence forces and the governor-general's office are unable to deal with them", Ayatollah Sayed Jaleddin Taheri, aged 70, had said of the radicals, "let them tell me, and I will put them in their place."

In two decades since the Islamic revolution, attacks on cinemas, newspapers and bookstores accused of promoting cultural laxness have rarely been chal-

lenged by the Iranian authorities, who have given broad latitude to the self-proclaimed enforcers of strict cultural standards.

What is unusual about what happened in Isfahan, where Snowman finally opened in mid-December, is that a leading member of the country's ruling clerical establishment joined the new government in advocating the rule of law, even if it means turning against those who claim to be acting to protect Islamic morals.

"He's either mad or brave," Hossain Payghambari, a carpet merchant, said of Ayatollah Taheri and his decision to confront the radicals, who call themselves the Hezbollah, or followers of the Party of God. "The important thing is that the film is showing, and that's a big step."

Even though they hold

The day the film was to open, radicals shredded posters and attacked viewers. The security forces did nothing

power in Iran, religious leaders have often condoned and even encouraged the radicals' illegal attacks, in much the same spirit with which they urged Iranians to rise up against Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, whose government was seen as having been hopelessly corrupted by Western values.

But President Khatami, a relatively moderate cleric, has urged Iranians to overcome that spirit of "rising against the law".

Snowman, a black comedy, was financed by the Islamic Propagation Organisation, which is closely affiliated to the government, and it is now showing in 22 cities around Iran.

Its ending is politically correct. The man, who had relocated to Turkey in pursuit of a visa, falls in love with an Iranian woman and they return to their homeland. — New York Times

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IT'S WORTH LIVING IN LONDON



The Minoan ruins attract 1.3 million visitors a year. But popularity may prove to be Knossos's downfall as footsteps wear away the monument

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM BERRY

Ravages of tourism and time force action at Knossos

The legendary home of the Minotaur is crumbling, and the locals are worried. Helena Smith reports from Crete

ABOVE the knoll in the valley where Knossos lies, the talk is of crumbling stones. In the souvenir shops outside the spot where Europe's first civilised culture evolved, people are beginning to fret. The ravages of tourism and time are eating like never before into the Palace of Minos, that great Cretan showcase of ancient Minoan art. In the Minotaur taverna — where visitors have been stopping ever since Sir Arthur Evans sent tremors through the archaeological world with his rediscovery of the Minoans in 1900 — the talk is focused on the palace's fading floors. If things go on like this, the proprietress grumbled, the legendary home of the Minotaur will be no more. Make no mistake, said Yiota Perakaki, the site of the mythological labyrinth had been vanishing "before our eyes" for years. "We are very, very worried. Crete, after all, would be nothing without Knossos."

Ms Perakaki, who can recall playing in the ruins of the palace as a child, is not alone. The concern is echoed like a mantra all the way down the craggy hill to the colonnades of the monument itself. "Every year more tourists come," said Pandelis, an affable guard who agreed to give an impromptu guided tour. "And every year you see the damage. There have been times when I have wondered whether this place would continue to exist." After the Acropolis, the magnificent Minoan findings draw more crowds — approximately 1.3 million annually — than any other archaeological treasure in Greece. No one has voiced their fears about the site more than conservationists. Archaeologists, not least from the British School at Athens, have worked tirelessly on the excavation since Sir Arthur purchased the site from a Turkish bey in 1900. "From the moment any monument is unearthed it will deteriorate," said Colin Macdonald, the British School's curator at Knossos.



Sir Arthur Evans spent more than 30 years reconstructing the monument after its rediscovery in 1900

"We may not have pollution here but people and rain have been dissolving it like a candy bar." The signs of decay are everywhere. Walls have crumbled and floors have corroded. To their horror experts recently discovered that even the levels of door jams were dropping — fast. In the 43 years since the British School gave Knossos to the Greek state, tourism has exploded. Officials estimate that as many as 4,000 visit the site on peak days. "The Minoan palaces, like all prehistoric sites, were constructed out of very soft stone and gypsum, rather than granite or marble," said Alexander Karetsou, who heads Crete's archaeological service. "Much of the monument has literally been washed away by tourists trampling all over it."

Last summer the outcry from locals prompted the socialist government to launch a mammoth rescue operation. The 100 million drachma (£215,000) project is the single biggest intervention in the monument since Sir Arthur did his own, highly controversial, restorations in the early 1900s. Under the new programme, walkways have been erected above and around the site, while the floors and ceilings of areas such as the queen's apartments have been reinforced. Parts of the palace have been closed to the public. "If we had done this 20 years ago we might have saved some of the floors and walls," sighed Mr Karetsou. "Unfortunately archaeological interventions of this magnitude always take a lot of international debate and discussion."

The extremes of the Cretan weather — which played such a major role in Evans' daring reconstruction of the monument during more than 30 years of work on the site — have exacerbated the decay. "The valley is very damp and the temperature differs even in the springtime between the night and day are huge," said Mr Karetsou. "Once you get cracks in the stone they quickly turn to powder." That will almost certainly mean the rescue operation will continue way into the next millennium when Knossos celebrates its centennial anniversary as a modern archaeological discovery. "But more than anything else our aim will be to maintain the monument's integrity," said Mr Macdonald. "Whatever work is done will be reversible."

Archaeology moves with the times. If future generations want to change the way they see the finds — which ironically gave the "myths" of Minos, Daedalus and the labyrinth their first solid foundation — they can. In the souvenir shops above the knoll that option may seem irrelevant now. But for a moment, at least, it takes some of the sadness out of the talk of crumbling stones.

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Turks fear catastrophe in overcrowded Bosphorus

With 50,000 ships a year, it's just a matter of time, writes Chris Morris in Istanbul

APPROACHING Istanbul from the Aegean Sea, the view from the bridge of the oil tanker Niles gives a new perspective on the extraordinary sights of the old metropolis. Mosques and churches appear suddenly through the gathering gloom, clinging to the shore of the Bosphorus, the narrow channel which cuts through Turkey's largest city. The scene is beautiful but deceptive. With 12 changes of course and four strong currents, this is one of the most hazardous waterways in the world. Fifty thousand ships pass through the Bosphorus every year, and Turkey is worried that a further increase in tanker traffic could cause a catastrophic accident.

The Niles has taken a pilot on board, but it is not a compulsory requirement. The rules governing navigation of the Bosphorus, first set out in the Montreux Convention of 1936, guarantee free passage in peacetime for vessels of any country carrying any cargo. With his eyes on the radar screen, Selim Oguzlu, who has guided ships along the Bosphorus for years, says a critical point has been reached. "Most of the ships which pass through here carry dangerous cargoes. One mistake, and a city of 10 million people is under threat."

Halfway down the channel, the Niles passes a tanker which has run aground. There have been hundreds of minor accidents over the years, but there have also been disasters. In March 1994 two vessels collided and 29 seamen were killed as oil fires raged on the water for four days. After that incident, Turkey introduced tougher navigation rules, but other countries — notably Russia and Greece — say the new regulations break international law. The arguments about the volume of traffic using the Bosphorus are taking on a new importance as oil begins to flow from the vast new oil fields around the Caspian Sea. Russia wants the bulk of the oil to be taken to the port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea, and then transported by tanker through the Bosphorus to the Mediterranean and world markets beyond. Turkey says Russia's plans would double the volume of tanker traffic.



Violence, insecurity and unemployment plunge France into winter of discontent

ATHOUSAND unemployed workers marching in Marseille; jobless protesters staging sit-ins around the country; cars set ablaze by youths in Strasbourg; strikes by bus drivers angry about assaults; the homeless briefly occupying the lobby of a prestigious Paris hotel. France is grappling with growing discontent, six months after Lionel Jospin's socialist came to power with a pledge to prioritise unemployment and social justice, and despite encouraging economic indicators.

President Jacques Chirac said as much in his New Year's address to the country. "We live in uncertain and difficult times," he said. "There is too much violence, too much insecurity, in the country, on public transport, on the streets. Together with unemployment, this is today your number one concern."

The state had to show more understanding, he said, adding that closer European integration was the best way "to bring down the unemployment that has hit us so hard". More than a third of France's 3.1 million unemployed have been out of work for more than a year. Although the unemployment rate fell marginally to below 12.5 per cent in November, it rose for the long-term jobless. Youth unemployment is blamed for much of the violence in more than 20 French towns in recent months. Cars and buildings have been set alight; police and refuse collectors have been attacked with bottles and baseball bats; depressed suburbs of towns from Lille in the north to Toulouse in the south have experienced battles between police and teenagers; and in Strasbourg on New Year's Eve, 53 cars were set ablaze, and 21 phone booths and 33 bus shelters were smashed.

سكان البحر

A bloody new year

Believers in peace must unite against others

THE NEW year in Northern Ireland could hardly have got off to a more miserable start. As 1997 turned into 1998, one man lay dead and five wounded after two balacava-clad hitmen decided to ring in the new year with the sound of automatic gunfire. Witnesses said it was a miracle that many more were not killed; but for "luck" the attack on the Clifton Tavern could well have entered the history books as the New Year's Eve Massacre. And this at the start of a year many — not all of them naïve idealists — thought would see a settlement to the conflict that has blighted the province for so long.

That hope is not dead yet, but it looks desperately frail. The murder last Saturday of the loyalist war lord Billy Wright in the Maze prison has touched off a round of revenge and counter-revenge attacks that has taken Northern Ireland back to the darkest of bad old days. The loyalist extremists said their shooting of ex-IRA man Seamus Dillon late on Saturday night was meant as a mere "mark of respect" suggesting that a larger act of retaliation was to come. If the Cliftonville shootings were planned to serve that purpose, only to be thwarted, then the loyalist desire for vengeance may not yet be satiated. Some fear the terrorists may use tonight's highly-charged Celtic vs Rangers game — when the bars will be packed with Protestants and Catholics watching TV pictures of the match as a kind of surrogate version of their war — to take their next fix of revenge.

At first all this bloodshed seemed tragic, of course, but not yet fatal to the peace process. The main players — the Irish National Liberation Army and the Loyalist Volunteer Force founded by the late Mr Wright — were both outside that process, partners in rejectionism.

Their shared strategy was to derail the Stormont talks, stirring so much bitterness in their respective communities that each side would eventually refuse to sit down with the other. In that situation the response was clear: the parties committed to peace would have to hold firm, to reject the rejectionists. Just as the Israeli government and Yasser Arafat have often had to unite against both the Jewish and Palestinian extremists, so Gerry Adams and David Trimble would have to stand together against the INLA and the LVR.

Now, however, even that reading looks too hopeful. For the threat to the talks now appears to come not just from the naysayers outside — but from within. Security sources said yesterday that the killers of Cliftonville may well have been, or were at least assisted by, more mainstream loyalist paramilitaries — those whose political leaders sit around the Stormont table. Those leaders did not deny it. This is an alarming development; it means that the much-tested loyalist ceasefire is now either dead or dying.

It also leaves the British Government in a tight corner. Should it eject the fringe unionist parties from the talks — jeopardising the entire process — as it doubtless would with Sinn Féin if the IRA broke its ceasefire? Nationalists were wise enough not to demand that yesterday. Instead they asked that the leaders of mainstream unionism, chiefly Mr Trimble, drop their current equivocation over the peace process and dedicate themselves to it wholeheartedly. For as long as they do not, the loyalist ultras can continue to denounce the talks as illegitimate. The situation is urgent: those who believe in negotiation must now unite against those who do not. Otherwise this may indeed be a bloody new year.

Killing the future

But we could be saved by a sponge

EAST MONTH, scientists and economists at Cornell University in the US tried to calculate with some rigour what humans should have paid their fellow creatures — plants, animals and microbes — for services rendered gratis during 1997. They came up with a minimum worldwide bill of \$2.9 trillion for things like nitrogen fixation, crop pollination, biological pest control, waste disposal, natural pharmaceuticals, ecotourism, wild foods and carbon dioxide clearance.

The calculation, of course, is a complete nonsense: without bacteria to fix nitrogen and plants to respire oxygen, and little scavengers to convert the dead into nutrients for the living, none of us would be here at all. It was another tactic to promote the idea of investing in biodiversity: of keeping the immeasurable variety of life on the planet. "When you compare our spending to the benefits we reap, we're really getting a bargain," said Professor David Pimentel, of Cornell.

And on the first day of the New Year, a team of British scientists demonstrated that humans have not yet begun to measure the variety of nature's goods and services. They reported that it would take up to 20 per cent of the world's taxonomists just to sort out the species in a few hectares of one bit of African forest. Field biologists tend to see two things simultaneously. They see life's overwhelming richness. They also see it disappearing fast. There is no debate about either aspect. Government scientists and Greenpeace scientists see and say exactly the same thing: that species extinction at a rate unprecedented in evolutionary history has already begun. It is not just a matter of oblivion for many of the world's big cats, or the slow death of pandas, or the decline of three-fourths of the world's bird population, or the vanishing of about one plant species in eight in the

continental US: in the next century up to a half of all living things could steal away into the eternal night. Most creatures are very small, and have never been counted or examined properly: we won't even know them to say goodbye. Yet we depend on them intimately.

The scientists who work for big business know this very well, even if investors do not. Almost everything on our dinner plates stems from the genetic oddities of a few clusters of legumes, tubers and grasses. More than 120 prescription drugs are derived from plants; a new generation of antibiotics is likely to come from a study of secretions of slugs and termites which creep around in slimy places but never develop gangrene or even ringworm. Medical researchers are looking with new respect at sponges, which do not develop cancer: why not? What have they got that we have not? The economic botanists are collecting furiously because they know resistance to tomorrow's crop diseases will be somewhere in the genes of wild progenitors and all-but-extinct landraces. A few years ago some US botanists calculated that the value of as-yet-undiscovered drugs in the world's forests could be \$147 billion. The economic arguments for preserving the other 10 million or maybe 100 million species on the planet, are overwhelming. The economic return for destroying them is zero.

But the argument is stronger than that: the end of all other species would be accompanied by the extinction of all humans. It follows that even a small impoverishment of life's stock means the impoverishment of the humans who think they own the planet. So a much bigger investment in basic research — of the sort pursued at London's Natural History Museum, at Kew, at London Zoo, at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology and so on — would seem a brilliant idea, wouldn't it? Well, wouldn't it?

A metaphor for monarchy

Britannia won't rule the waves if she is under them

THE WISH of John Brown, the 96-year-old chief designer of the royal yacht Britannia, is understandable. He wants his creation to be scuttled in order to bring the yacht's life to a dignified end in keeping with longstanding seafaring traditions. Mr Brown, who is a former managing director of the yard that built it, made his request in a letter to the Glasgow Herald yesterday. The Princess Royal is believed to share his views. The Government, however, is considering two bids: one from the port of Leith near Edinburgh, and one from the Manchester Ship Canal. Both would endow the boat with a commer-

cial future even if it wouldn't be kept in pristine condition. Other options have been rejected, including plans to make her the centrepiece of a maritime heritage park on the Clyde, the river of her birth. None of these would appeal to Mr Brown, who retains an idealised view of the Britannia frozen from another age. The yacht, like the royal family itself, must adapt or die. Drilling holes in it and allowing it to sink to the bottom of the ocean is not only environmentally unfriendly but could easily be interpreted as something else: an ill-fated metaphor for monarchy.

Minister in Drugs Scandal latest



Letters to the Editor

Tales of betrayal red and green

IT comes as no surprise that some old tankie would crawl out of the woodwork to smear an author's name, after he's safely dead, of course (Widow defends Laurie Lee's moment of glory (December 31)). The communists have been broadcasting disinformation about the Spanish Civil War since 1938. By and large, the purpose has been to cover-up their own less than glorious role in the whole tragic affair. It would perhaps have been just as well for Laurie Lee if he "was unknown in the left-wing movement". Those who Franco didn't shoot, the communists were often did. Paul Burroughes, 7 Thornton Court, St. Hilda's Road, Manchester M16 9PJ.

YOU quote the woman knowingly infected with HIV in Cyprus as saying of her former lover: "There is no purpose to be served by keeping him in prison". What then was the purpose of putting him there in the first place? People with HIV need care and support. People involved in sexual relationships, as consenting adults, need to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour. Proposals to make HIV transmission a criminal offence can never be seen to serve no purpose. Let's drop them, just as graciously as this woman has. John Nicholson, Director, George House Trust, 75 Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FX.

I AGREE with everything (Peter Back says (Letters, December 31)) except his statement that I "fail to understand" the value of grazing to the survival of moorland. All our unique moors, heaths and downs have been established solely after centuries of grazing by sheep and rabbits, and I would hate to see such lovely scenery vanishing, as it slowly does even today. Oliver Rackham has pointed out that free planning "erodes the historic landscape" and uncontrolled spread should certainly not be allowed. But it so happens that Dartmoor, with or without grazing, would never revert to forest. Its climax canopy is moorland; that is its natural wilderness and long may it remain so. Tony Ellis, Middlecott Cottage, Marchand Bishop, Crediton, Devon EX17 6RW.

ISA Buckingham (Luck must run out for insurers, December 31) reports that widespread damage from the Montreal volcano cost the insurance industry very little. This is nothing to do with luck and everything to do with bad faith. In order to avoid paying claims in Montserrat, many insurers took advantage of a small print to cancel policies mid-year. This happened out of the blue even though policyholders had paid their premiums in full.

Such action is akin to UK insurers cancelling all policies in Marlow because the Thames has started to flood upstream, or cancelling all UK policies because the Met Office has forecast strong winds. This is not what most people think they're buying when they take out insurance. Penny Webster, 20 Harefield, Harefield Wood, Esher, Surrey KT10 9TQ.

SO Michael Billington thinks the excellence of Irish playwrighting is down to the disappearance of "the sense of the presence of God in Ireland." (Is there anyone there? Arts, December 31) Good Lord. And I thought it had to do with the fact that the Irish theatre, unlike the English theatre, is alive with energy and talent. Robert O'Mahoney, 15 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1.

Can we trust the NHS?

TWO important issues have been missed in the debate on quangoes and the democratic deficit in the NHS (Leader, December 30). The green paper, Our Healthier Nation, which is expected this month, will highlight the links between inequities and the wider social and economic determinants of health. National government will be able to influence some of these factors as will local government. Continuity of local government and health authority boundaries will facilitate joint local health plans, as exemplified in the recent NHS white paper.

This is one of the rationales for seeing local government as the democratic authority which should have strong links with the NHS commissioning authorities and primary care groups, including sharing health and social services budgets. It is different to the question of membership of NHS trust boards highlighted by Lord Hunt and Dr Peter Fisher (Letters, December 31 and January 1) and should not threaten the national character of the NHS.

But to improve health, people need to participate and have influence over their local environment and services. This need for public involvement in the NHS will require many different mechanisms, which should complement the formal democratic models at national, regional and local government levels. Tony Jewell, 2 Bury Road, Stapleford, Cambridge CB2 5BP.

DR Fisher wants NHS trusts abolished, but wants democratic accountability at the planning and commissioning level. This does not affect your Leader's argument that the need for talent "of the highest calibre" can be reconciled with elections.

I agree, but it requires the best democratic techniques, including providing voters with relevant data on candidates by the Ross scheme. This consists of two parts: verified biographical data, and (optionally) an assessment using up-to-date techniques of personal selection. Voters must be able to rank candidates or to use delegated preferential voting. Votes must be counted by the transferable vote system of PR.

The quango should elect its chairman by a method conforming to the Condorcet criterion, thus ensuring that any candidate who, in a two-way comparison, beats every rival, is elected. Richard Benjamin, 11 Arncliffe Road, London N11 1AP.

CLLIR Maureen Ruparel (Letters, December 31) is wrong to say that social services funding will be administered by health trust quangoes. Frank Dobson has stated that he will put in post those who have the best expertise and he expects social services and health personnel to work together. This sounds like their local NHS. Paul Holman, 184 Rock Avenue, Gillingham, Kent ME7 5PR.

CLLIR Ruparel ignores the steps taken by the Government to improve openness within the NHS.

At the end of July, Frank Dobson wrote to all NHS trusts requiring them to hold meetings in public. This was in addition to the announcement that people appointed to NHS bodies will be more representative of local communities, patients and carers and subject to independent assessment.

He also announced that from April 1998 waiting times will be according to clinical need with no more preferential waiting times for patients of GP fundholders. In October, Paul Boateng ordered the inspection of nursing homes to be open to the public.

The December white paper recognises the importance of true partnership and states that this will be dependent on sharing of information with other NHS organisations. No management information in the future will be classified as "commercial in confidence" between NHS bodies. In addition, the NHS trusts will be expected to publish annually details of their performance. The days of the NHS trust acting alone without regard for others are over.

Creating a modern and dependable NHS will also put doctors and nurses in the driving seat, deciding what treatment local people get. Patients and users will have more information and a bigger say in their local NHS. Paul Clark MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

This story makes dopes of us all

DO you honestly believe that the press in any other democratic country would tolerate editors being bullied into not naming the son of a senior government minister suspected of dealing in cannabis, or a legal system which imposes a gagging order based on no credible precedent in a secret hearing (I want to be named, says minister with son in drugs case, January 1)?

Every journalist in the US and Australia, and other Commonwealth countries which enjoy a semblance of democracy and have the guts to maintain principles of open justice, regard us with contempt.

Shame on the Government, shame on the judiciary and shame on those editors who cannot see the wood for the trees. Your shame is greater than any due to a teenage boy suspected of selling a joint. Tim Crook, 4100 Cottage, Woodgate Road, East Bergholt, Nr Colchester.

WE were sorry to see the same nauseating hypocrisy over Dawn Aldred's brush with the police as the rest of the press (Leader, December 30). If Piers Morgan's account of the events is true, she also witnessed the youth being supplied by the main dealer. Why did she not interview him and reveal his name? Dr CA Horn, 11 Harwell Road, Sutton Courtenay OX14 4BN.

DURING her investigation, did Ms Aldred feel obliged to buy the lad a drink, and if so was it an alcoholic drink? If it was, has she reported the land-lord to the police? John Lawrence, 155 Highgate Road, London NW5 1LJ.

SUPPOSE one should not be surprised anymore by articles such as Maureen Freely's (Spill stupidity, December 29). It is frightening that so many parents now admit that they took drugs in their youth. How do they expect children to develop in such an atmosphere? Robert Brachgrube, 1 Sackville Drive, Stonegate, Leics LE5 5TS.

SURELY the most telling aspect of this case is that, in order to appear genuine customers, the undercover reporters posed as estate agents. Nothing so neatly encapsulates contemporary Britain. Frederick Barker, 31 Egerton Road, Ashton, Preston PR2 1AJ.

Dishonoured

IN view of Elton John's knighthood (Report, December 31), should there not have been much greater honours to Lynne Dawson, John Tavener and all the choristers, instrumentalists, etc who contributed so much to an occasion which could have done without his appalling intrusion. David Thomas, 10 Woodside Avenue, Bridgend, Mid-Glamorgan.

JM Duggan (Letters, January 1) is wrong. Tony Finney was chair of Preston health authority for only three or four years. He resigned, I suspect, because his fundamental decency would not allow him to carry out the so-called reforms that his successors performed with such relish. Stephen Davies, 31 Egerton Road, Ashton, Preston PR2 1AJ.

A Country Diary

FERMANAGH: What turned out to be a silent vigil in the hope of seeing pine martens might have been the highlight of our week on the National Trust estate at Crom Castle. Ian Herbert, the head warden, took us across the waters of Upper Lough Erne to Corliss Wood by a 14-foot launch and we trod carefully through the woodland to enter the hide. Earlier, he had baited a log with raspberry jam, for experience has taught that pine martens are to be tempted by a jam-coated log. We watched the light faded but martens did not appear. A robin returned repeatedly to taste the jam. Simon King, the television naturalist, had waited for four hours to get shots of the creatures, so we did not feel too discommoded by the unrewarded vigil. The logbook in the hide recorded that a number of television crews had spent hours awaiting the appearance of the martens. None had been disappointed, though some had waited a very long time indeed. One, eventually successful, recorded the dental decay of

the martens — due, no doubt, to its intermittent dependence on raspberry jam. The pine martens, rare even in these remote parts, are clearly secure on the Crom estate. Two years ago, hungry after a hard winter, they effectively destroyed a major heronry on the estate by consuming the fertilised eggs in the nests. Not that herons are endangered in these watery parts. As I stood on this quay looking across to Inishfintra, a large heron suddenly appeared, took off in dramatic style from just below one and flew lazily over the dark waters of the lough. The level of Upper Lough Erne rose dramatically during the week, submerging fixed pontoons. Is it tidal, I wondered? The answer is no, it just reflects surface run-off in a region of high rainfall. This freshwater lake system is an internationally important one for a great variety of bird and aquatic life. We missed the martens but the woodland deer and the hiddie showed well even in midwinter. COLIN LUCKHURST



House calls

JAMES Lees-Milne's contribution to modern Britain (Obituary, December 30) lay in enabling impoverished aristocrats to continue living, at the public expense, in the manner to which they had at ways been accustomed. Many of the so-called "great" houses with which he saddled the National Trust — Cliveden, Poleston, Lacy, Arlington Court, etc — have neither architectural merit nor historic associations of any consequence, as honest officials of the trust have conceded. Yet their upkeep represents a

huge drain on the strained resources of the trust.

By all means let the nation foot the bill for the maintenance of Montacute, Blickling, Knole, Lyme and similar genuine treasures if it so wishes. But that was not intended to be the role of the National Trust. If that disastrously wrong road had not been taken, with the launch in 1906 of the Country House Scheme, so vigorously propelled by Lees-Milne, how many more acres of superb landscape the trust could have afforded to save from the despoiler? Stanley Williamson, 15 Thorn Road, Bramhall, Cheshire SK7 1HG.

Family way

YOUR leader on families (December 29) is welcome but without an early years policy all later provision is meaningless. The muddle over lone parents exposed the Government's limited grasp of the issue — that children thrive when they are well looked after. This is an immense task and few parents manage it without sharing.

There is a balance to be struck between parental care (supported by leave from work in the early months) and childcare (by well-trained staff) but we will not get that right without a political understanding of the social and psychological conditions that promote personal wellbeing in children. It's not much use having a job if you can't be there to give your children breakfast and put them to bed. Dr Sebastian Kraemer, Tavistock Clinic, 120 Belgrave Lane, London NW5 5BA.

Up in smoke

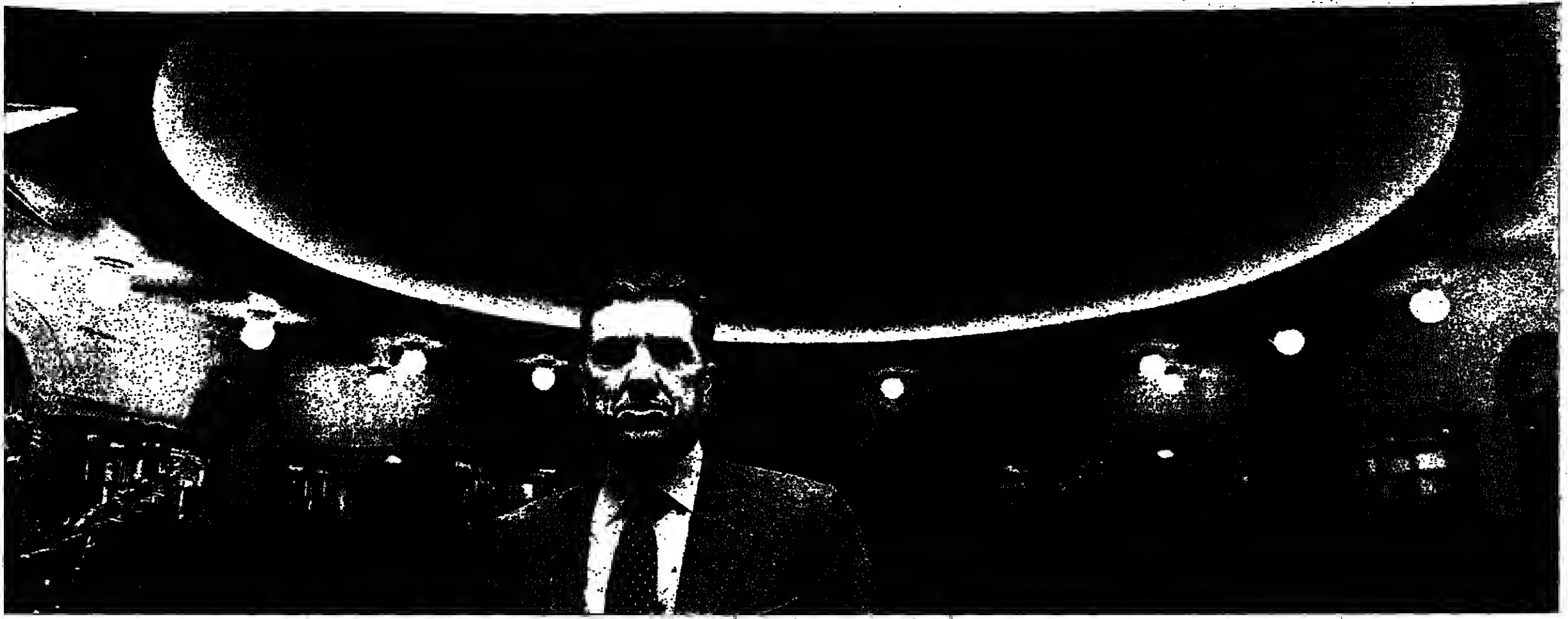
AS much as I applaud Liz Cheney's eight-point plan to give up smoking (Leader, December 30), I'm afraid she will not get very much success. Smoking is a powerful drug. It needs to be handled with vengeance. Here goes.

Take out a cigarette and lighter when the urge arises. Place the cigarette in your mouth and strike a light. Now, take the cigarette out of your mouth, hold it in front of your face and start swearing. "You lousy, rotten bastard... You're dying for me to light you... So, you lousy etc, etc, I am not going to..." Repeat as often as necessary. By the time you have finished and regained your cool, the urge has passed. It may take a fortnight, a month, three months. But urges become less frequent. If worked for me and some of my friends. Stanley Medlocks, 6 Broadlands Close, London NE4 4AF.

هكذا من الاصل

Big firms mean boring jobs? Not necessarily, say Julia Finch and Lisa Buckingham

Corporate life can be weird and wonderful



Odd job men... Searcher-out of interesting bookshop sites Will Haverstock at Waterstone's Reading branch, a former church, and, below, Peter Coates works on a cask under the eye of retired cooper Clive Hollis. MAIN PHOTOGRAPH GARRY WEAVER

BEHIND every bland corporation there are hundreds, sometimes thousands, of boring jobs. Staff sit at the same desk in the same office every working day and dream of doing something just a little different.

But some are different. And they are not all the preserve of the adventurous self-employed. Inside some of the most ordinary organisations there are some real cameo roles.

Those who have a way with words will probably envy Peter Sanson, who has just been appointed poet-in-residence by Marks & Spencer, which will involve poetry readings for staff and customers. He may be a little out of the ordinary at present but the Poetry Society intends to place about 100 poets in businesses and schools.

Office jokers, on the other hand, might be more interested in the role of official jester, as employed by British Airways and the publishing group Reed Elsevier.

Tom Radford-Tempest's job, as curator to a large corporate art collection, sounds like one of those glamorous, travel-the-world, earn-millions types of jobs. But for Mr Tempest-Radford it is more a question of making art work for a business. No good, he says, buying a Van Gogh if that eliminates the budget for the next hundred years.

"Any collection should be in relation to the size of the business," says the man who has managed every aspect of Prudential's substantial art collection for the past four years. "And it has to work for the business."

Prudential, for example, has decided its collection is primarily aimed at staff and visitors, although the company happily lends works to exhibitions. Mr Tempest-Radford moves the collection around four times a year so employees have a chance to experience a wide range of works. He also tries to ensure visitors experience a stimulating selection as they move from the modernist dogs in

the Pru's reception area to the moody English coastal works in the corporate dining room.

"You don't have to spend massive amounts but quality should never be at issue, whether it is a £30 print or a £1 million work," Mr Tempest-Radford said.

History resonates through Barry Read's job as casualty book clerk at Lloyd's of London. He is one of the liveried staff, called waiters, in the £10 billion-a-year insurance market whose jobs date back to the foundation of the underwriting business in Edward Lloyd's coffee room in 1774.

Frock-coated Mr Read is responsible for entering marine losses in the underwriting room's loss book, using a quill pen. His predecessors have penned tragic entries for the Titanic, the Derbyshire and the Bluebird, which was

while Mr Mamby is halfway through a four-year apprenticeship.

One hundred years ago, every town and village had its cooper, but the trade went into steep decline when metal casks were introduced in the 1950s.

Each hand-crafted cask lasts a lifetime. "The real skill is in making the cask from straight pieces of oak and crafting them into curved staves to form a vessel which holds an exact measure of beer," explained Mr Coates. No nails, screws or glue are used and the cooper's tools, which are no longer commercially available, must be handed down or custom made.

Barrels come in four sizes: 54-gallon hogsheads, 36-gallon barrels, 18-gallon kilderkins and nine-gallon firkins. These days hogsheads are rarely used, but apprentices like Mr

starliest of superstars by their first names.

An average working day for Edwin Green can span more than 150 years. One minute he is poring over vast leather-bound parchment ledgers dating from 1836, the next he is tapping away at a PC.

Mr Green, aged 49, is an archivist, employed by Midland Bank and his job is to keep the complete business records of the bank, from the first current-account ledgers to details of the most recent product launches.

He has worked for Midland for 23 years and was the first full-time archivist to be employed by bank. Aside from business documentation he can provide details of family finances for famous figures from history who banked with the Midland or any of the many banks it has taken over in the past 150 years. He has records of the history and architecture of every one of the bank's branches, collections of old bank notes and copies of the concept drawings which inspired modern branch designs.

"It all has just as important a part to play in history as political and diplomatic records," said Mr Green, who has a history degree and a masters in economic history, and has become such an expert on banking history that he has nine books to his name.

The ancient ledgers he presides over are almost works of art. One staff record book which dates from around 1840 is illustrated with sepia photographs of every employee, along with details of position, promotions and salary. He has managers' notebooks dating back more than 100 years, exquisitely handwritten details of the managers' thoughts about their customers.

The archivists are catalogued on computer but paper records of all documents are kept. "And it will continue to be that way, because there is still nothing that compares to paper in terms of lasting power."

His workload mushroomed when Midland was taken over



by the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank in 1992, and HSBC moved its HQ, and vast shipments of records, to London. He now has two assistants, both recent history graduates.

"Inquiries dominate our work. We are constantly being asked for information and in 23 years here I can honestly say every day has been different."

Will Haverstock spends his days touring Britain looking for attractive towns for new Waterstone's bookshops.

In an age of sprawling out-of-town shopping centres and past indoor malls, finding new retail space is not a problem, but Waterstones does not want anonymous slots in Ar-

dale Centres. Mr Haverstock, aged 45, scours the country for unusual locations. His efforts have resulted in new Waterstone's stores in an old church in Reading and a former cinema in Swanscombe.

Since he took the job six months ago he has covered 25,000 miles and visited 70 towns from Dumfries to Torquay. "I have been to so many lovely towns I had not been to before, like Kings Lynn, Rugby and Bury St Edmunds. Property specialists and legal people do all the detailed work on leases and the negotiating, so I'm just left with the interesting part - walking around the towns, soaking up the atmosphere."

"I think about whether it is

an attractive place to shop which people who live nearby will travel to. I look at what sort of food is on sale, whether there are nice markets and restaurants - and sample a good few of them. I look out for nice jewellery shops, as they are often a good indicator of the type of town it is, and I size up the competition."

"I'm looking, wherever possible, for architecturally interesting buildings, but they must also be adaptable for retail use."

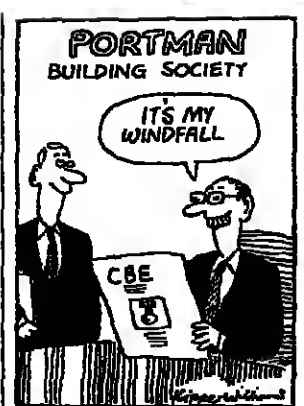
"We have also just opened in the old town hall in Folkestone. It is a lovely building and local people are pleased it is being used for something so fitting. It also used to be the local magistrates' court, so the storage rooms are in the old cells."

Underside

Dan Atkinson

FORGET Renters, Dow Jones and the rest: our Government's propaganda wire carried the real news stories as 1997 merged into 1998. There was the item on the new look British Hallmarking Council, courtesy Nigel Griffiths, consumer and corporate affairs minister. Among the guardians of the nation's precious metals will be "J G Evans... currently director of environmental services at Hounslow Borough Council" and "Mrs S P Evans... chairman of Bromley and District Consumer Group". Then a fascinating piece on the Animal By-Products (Amendment) Order 1997, from soon-to-be-rebranded MAFF. And what's this? "Keith Holliswell, the first ever UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator, will start his new job full time on Monday January 5." Yes, quite.

L'ORDRE du brun nez, alias Euro-croop of the year, goes to the Financial Times, whose analysis of the single currency's



prospects contained the following hard-hitting commentary: "The EMU timetable remained intact. This was a tribute to the French and German governments... It was also a testament to the skill of a handful of independent professionals in Brussels and Frankfurt." Way not tell us how good looking they are?

MEANWHILE, the FT carried an interesting Freudian slip in the same edition, December 30, with a reference to "Ernie Stern, the former World Bank president". Actually, Ernie was never World Bank president,

merely vice-president. But such was his clout that a lot of people (possibly including Ernie) thought he was.

LEAST promising career outlook for 1998: Zimbabwean high court judge Wilson Sandura, who ruled on New Year's Eve that mobile-phone firm Econet had the right to challenge a government refusal to issue it with a licence. His court ruled also that a licence awarded to rival Telecel should be nullified. The Telecel consortium is led by Leo Mugabe, nephew of president Robert Mugabe, and includes senior officials from the ruling ZANU-PF party.

MOST promising career outlook for 1998: George Soros, the man with the golden gun. He wants an international credit insurance corporation to stave off global deflation, but who will head such a body? History reminds us that President Roosevelt, on setting up the Securities and Exchange Commission to clear up post-Crash Wall Street, appointed as its head not a goody-goody establishment figure but Joseph Kennedy, papa of president John and a ferocious bear trader. Al-

most as ferocious, in fact, as the man who blew away sterling, the ringier and the rest: George Soros.

LEAST promising career-bagging opportunity must now be the Portman building society, whose chief executive, Ken Cutley, picked up a CBE in the honours' list for services to the building society movement. That rather puts the lid on any chance of George Soros, the Portman on the stock market, doesn't it?

OPTIMIST of 1997: ice cream maker Treats, which rang out the old year with a share suspension. Immediate reaction may have been that Treats - shares floated around 180p in 1996, then melted to a suspension price of 84.5p - had more bad news for long-suffering shareholders. Not a bit of it. Treats is to spend more than £10 million on bulk ice cream maker Richmond, with a rights issue to pay for it. Onward and upward - or something.

FINALLY, no New Year would be complete without our regular reminder to Scotland Yard: caught the Budget leaker yet?

Big appetite for oven-ready chefs

Chris Barrie

THINK it's simple to make a trifle or an oven-ready chicken biryani? You'd be wrong. Wrong but typical of the population at large which is ignorant of the skills needed to devise new foods while also developing an insatiable appetite for them.

According to research by a recruitment consultancy specialising in the industry, food firms are desperate for skilled staff able to concoct new convenience meals.

Salary levels have shot up by 26 per cent on average in the past six months. Many smaller food firms are struggling to fill key posts.

Joanne Sellwood, director of the Daniel Bates Partnership, says the shortage is particularly acute among technical managers able to run the product development teams responsible for coming up with new and exotic tastes.

Ms Sellwood says the population is not only eating more convenience food, but is also

demanding more variety. "People want to pop something in the oven and then find it is delicious," she says.

The industry is buoyant because of the demand, but also fiercely competitive as supermarkets request different foods to win more high street business. And food technologists are in great demand. Besides development staff, food specialists are needed to monitor quality control and hygiene standards.

Ms Sellwood blames a dearth of graduates opting for relevant courses such as food science, home economics and food biochemistry. Admitting that school-leavers did not find much glamour in the idea of a career wearing "hair nets and wellies in a food laboratory", she insists the job can be well paid. A technical manager will earn at least £40,000 a year.

The consultants will launch a programme with universities and higher education colleges to raise awareness of the "rewarding nature of jobs in the food technology field".

Predict your way to £50,000.

Whether you're an investment novice or a seasoned stock market watcher, you can take part in the 1998 Investor of The Year competition, with a chance to share £50,000 worth of prizes. First prize includes two return flights on Concorde and £10,000 in cash. Full details this Sunday.

The Observer MONEY

سكان مصر

Tomorrow: Worker capitalism pays off in the Welsh Valleys

Plus: Diamonds are forever for the Oppenheims

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FinanceGuardian

Insurer's sale imperils jobs

Teresa Hunter

TROUBLED insurer Gan Life is to be sold in a £200 million-plus deal which will put a question mark over 1,500 jobs. Purchase of the French government-owned operation is the most ambitious yet for Life Assurance Holding Corporation, which was set up two years ago by Lord Rothschild and insurance veteran Sir Mark Weinberg to acquire all insurance companies.

French parent Société Centrale du Gan is being forced to

sell a number of overseas subsidiaries, as part of its privatisation programme formally announced just before Christmas. The future of its general insurance arm, Gan UK, is not yet decided but could involve a separate stock market flotation or management buy-out.

However, Gan opted to sell the life wing with its £2.8 billion assets and 350,000 policyholders separately after approaches from 25 potential bidders, believed to have included US insurer Lincoln National, the UK's Sun Alliance, Sun Life of Canada and Friends Provident.

The price and the scale of Gan's pensions mis-selling problems, which are among the worst in the industry, are likely to have deterred bidders other than LAHC, which hopes to clinch the deal within four to six weeks.

It proposes an upfront payment of £253.5 million, \$46 million in deferred payments and £30 million repayment of intra-group debt. Initial estimates had placed the value of the company at £200 million.

LAHC, which devoured Windsor Life, Crown Life and Combined Assurance, extracts its profits by

closing acquisitions to new business and stripping out extraneous costs.

It objects to descriptions such as asset-stripper and strenuously denies that it buys merely to wind down business. Chief executive John Wybrew said yesterday that profits followed rigorous administrative integration of operations which do not seek new customers. The Gan deal will more than double its £2.5 billion assets and add 740,000 policies to its 550,000 under management.

Mr Wybrew acknowledged that the Gan's Harlow-based operation, which employs 680

staff, would ultimately be moved to and subsumed by LAHC's Telford administrative centre, although it could continue operating from Essex for up to two years. Its 800-strong self-employed sales force is, however, effectively redundant as soon as the deal goes through, though an option for those who wish to join another insurer may be on the table.

LAHC assured policyholders that their investments would continue to be managed in their best interests, and said all mis-selling cases would be dealt with as soon as possible.

GAN UK formerly operated as General Portfolio and sold policies to football fans of Tottenham Hotspur football club.

It has resolved only one in 10 of its 1,502 priority mis-selling cases. The total of such cases is disproportionately large for a company of Gan's size. Europe's biggest mutual has only 1,600 cases. About 9 per cent of Gan's potential 10,000 cases have been resolved.

Mr Wybrew said: "We already have a substantial pensions unit reviewing our previous business and have met 99 per cent of our targets for 1997."

Notebook

Isolation will not beat this flu bug



Mark Milner

INSTABILITY and globalisation: two of the financial world's buzz-words of 1997 that are likely to stay in common parlance for much of 1998. Instability has been around as long as financial markets, from early examples like the 18th century South Sea bubble to the turmoil which has swept through Asia in recent months.

By contrast, globalisation is a newcomer to the lexicon of fashionable financial phraseology.

What events in 1997 have done, however, is threaten to link the two in popular perception, creating the impression that one feeds on the other, with globalisation allowing instability in one area to spread rapidly to another while making instability more likely.

To an extent there is an argument in favour of such a linkage. Technology means money moves rapidly around the world, around the clock. Investors have ever more opportunities to invest outside what might be regarded as their domestic markets and are just as able to withdraw the cash in a hurry if things start to go sour.

That matters. Investors operating on a global scale are less likely to select particular companies in which to buy shares than they would be when picking stocks in their domestic markets. Their investment strategies, especially in emerging markets, are more likely to be based on buying exposure to sectors, entire stock markets or even regions than to investing in individual companies.

Consequently, when capital takes flight it does so across the board, reflecting a loss of confidence in an entire economy rather than in specific stocks.

NOR are such broad-brush assessments confined to investors. Bankers become equally chary. That, too, can have wider repercussions. Several South Korean firms have put investment projects in Europe on hold, not because the commercial prospects have changed but because, as Korean corporates, they know they are going to have problems raising the funding.

Economic forecasters have already cut their predictions for global growth as a result of what has come to be called

the Asian contagion. There are concerns, too, that the Asian tigers' attempts to export their way out of trouble could spark a series of trade wars or even that the crisis could be world into the kind of recession that followed the Wall Street crash. Many fingers will be crossed both for the recuperative powers of Japan's financial services industry and the ability of China's economy to confound analysts who are predicting widespread unemployment and (possibly) political unrest to go with it.

It might not be an unmitigated disaster if recent events were to knock some of the lustre off the concept of globalisation. Organisations and institutions are being created to cope with the consequences of globalisation, which to outsiders appears remote from political control.

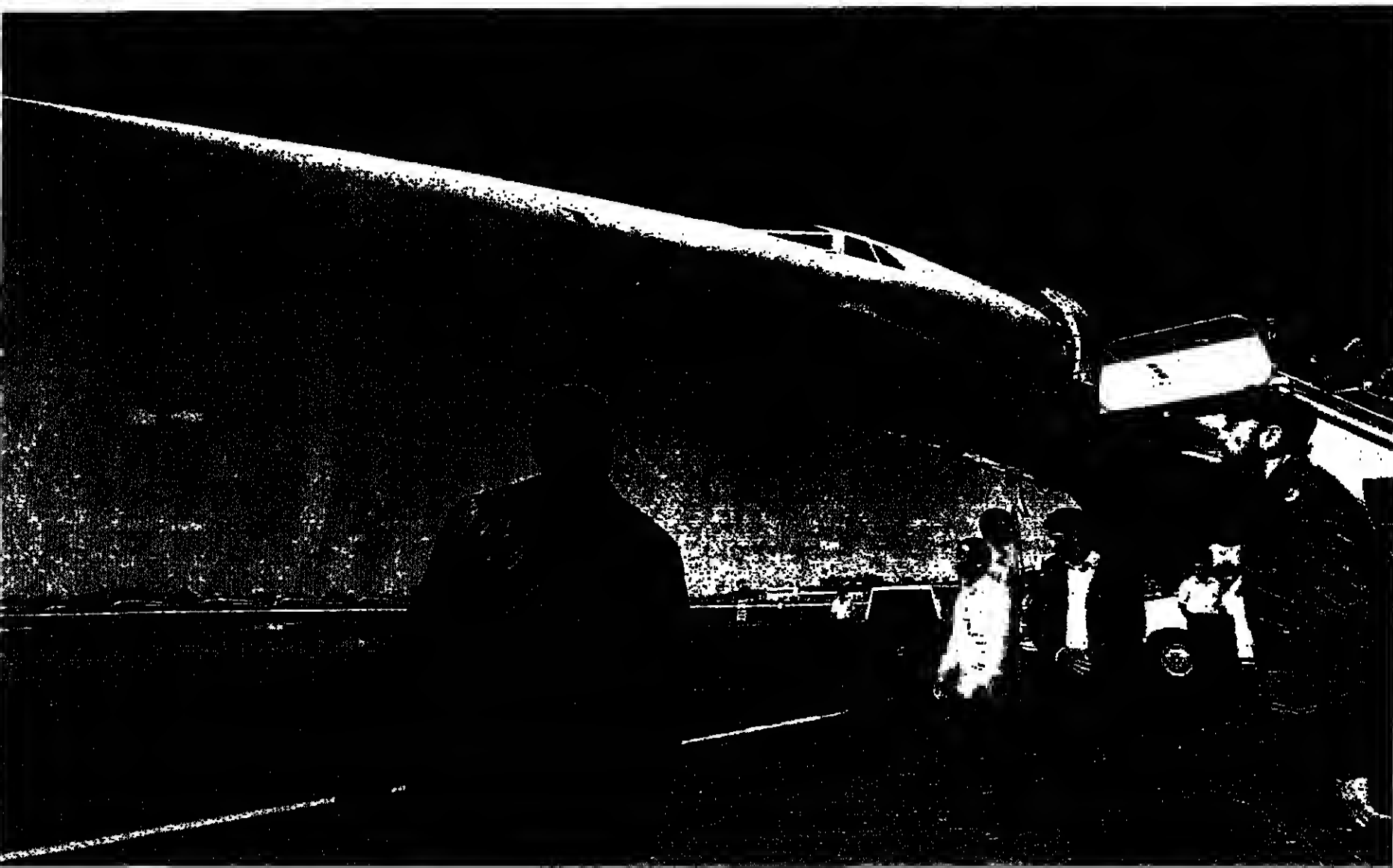
It is, however, one thing to question whether anything that can be slotted into the concept of globalisation must, therefore, be good and quite another to decide that globalisation equals instability and is therefore bad.

YET there must be a risk of such an idea gaining ground in the US and Europe. For the US, the issue is primarily one of the domestic politics of international trade. The country's unions, already showing greater self-confidence, are unlikely to sit back if they believe members' jobs are threatened by the competitive edge which the region's currency devaluations has given to many of Asia's economies. Certainly the trade card is one which Dick Gephardt, with his known protectionist sympathies, cannot ignore in his battle with Al Gore for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In Europe, the danger is more that attention will be concentrated on "domestic" issues. The introduction of the single currency is a huge task. But the EU has also committed itself to open its membership to countries in central and eastern Europe.

To achieve this, the Community's own structures will need to be reformed. The Common Agricultural Policy, for example, already imposes a heavy burden on European consumers. Its unreformed extension to more agriculturally based economies in central and eastern Europe would make the load intolerable.

The idea of an isolationist America or Fortress Europe looks improbable. But it would be dangerous enough if the next bout of instability, or even the continuation of the present one, were to find either region impatient or indifferent enough not to see it, in part at least, as their problem, too.



President Fidel Castro admires the nose section of the first Concorde to fly to Cuba. The Air France aircraft had brought 100 business people to Havana to explore opportunities for the new year as the country opens up to foreign investment

Bass seeks Far East hotel deal after Coral sale

Lisa Buckingham on possibilities for block-busting takeover by cash-rich group

LISURE group Bass is looking to be lining up a multi-billion pound hotel deal in the Far East following yesterday's confirmation that its Coral betting shops have been sold to Ladbroke for £375.5 million.

Although the group has said it wants to expand all three of its core businesses — branded drinks, leisure and hotels — insiders say hotels are being looked at most closely.

Senior executives at Bass, whose plans to buy the Carlsberg-Tetley brewing business were recently blocked by the Government, are thought to be convinced that, following the recent economic and currency turmoil, Asia is the region in which purchases should be made.

Bass, which yesterday refused to comment on potential targets for its near £3 billion acquisition war chest, has spent substantial time and money building up the portfolio of hotel brands, including Crown Plaza, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express.

The Meridien chain of hotels owned by Granada or Sainsbury's Inter-Continental outlets have been rumoured as potential targets for Bass which has shored up its reserves with the disposal of Gala bingo for £279 million and the sale of its managed pubs estate for £564 million a fortnight ago. About £250 million

will soon be handed back to shareholders but Bass could still summon up to £3 billion for a block-busting takeover.

The sale of Coral's book-making business to Ladbroke was completed unconditionally at the stroke of the new year and cannot be unwound even if the competition authorities

ask for a suspension of betting power in the high street. It is understood that Ladbroke, which is selling 128 of Coral's 900 shops to the Tote for £41 million, has been advised it will avoid a Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation even though the acquisition will give it something approaching 38 per cent of the off-course betting market which is only just beginning to recover from the impact of the National Lottery.

But senior executives believe the deal will still enhance earnings even if the MMC demands the sale of many more outlets. Ladbroke reckons there is substantial demand for betting shops which will mean there is no down side even if the competition authorities take a tough stance. An array of rival bidders were lined up against Ladbroke for this Coral business and companies such as Nomura, the Japanese bank which recently paid £700 million for rival William Hill, as well as the Tote are thought to want more shops.

Coral's estate, whose outlets are less profitable than Ladbroke's existing business, generated a surplus of £33 million last year on assets of £170 million. Ladbroke predicts initial annual savings of £10 million.

Asian leaders promise reform

Steve Busfield

THE leaders of Japan and South Korea yesterday gave new year pledges to find solutions for the financial crisis sweeping Asia.

South Korea's president-elect, Kim Dae-jung, used his new year message to warn of more hardship to come but said the country should be able to move on from International Monetary Fund stewardship within two years. "Inflation will flare up, unemployment rise and numerous companies collapse," he said.

The Japanese prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, promised to put his country's economy back on track and prevent Japan from triggering a global economic crisis. In a New Year's address to the nation, Hashimoto told the 123 million-strong populace not to worry about Japan's economic future. He claimed Japan's economy would not falter because the nation was

all pretences... from every segment of society, and correct the economic structure and conditions."

Last month, Kim Dae-jung, a long-time dissident, became the first opposition figure to be elected president. South Korea's economy was ravaged by corporate collapses in 1997 which culminated in a severe financial crisis.

The IMF came to South Korea's rescue during December, but the price for the near-£90 billion bail-out package was a massive restructuring of the economy. Kim Dae-jung has already initiated many reforms, although his five-year term does not start for another two months.

"There is no other choice for us," he said. "We should overcome today's crisis with international support and in cooperation with the IMF. We must use this opportunity to carry out reforms that have been delayed by internal resistance and barriers."

The president-elect also said this current crisis was

armed with 1,200 trillion yen (\$5.6 trillion) in private financial assets, \$800 billion (\$484 billion) in net foreign assets, and the world's largest foreign reserves, totalling more than \$200 billion.

"Therefore, you need not worry at all... I don't agree to pessimistic arguments that there is no future for Japan," he said.

Mr Hashimoto said he would press ahead with measures, including a one-time income tax cut of 2 trillion yen and the use of public funds worth 30 trillion yen to stabilise the financial system.

Mr Kim said South Korea was facing its most difficult time since the Korean War in the early 1950s.

Both Mr Kim and the outgoing president, Kim Young-sam, appealed for the nation to pull together in the crisis. Kim Young-sam, whose presidential term ends on February 24, said: "To revive the economy at the earliest possible time, we must remove, with resolute determination,

about South Korea's finances, not its economy as a whole. "There are still points of strength of our economy with its high growth potential and the people armed with patriotism and strong resolve.

Microsoft in cable frame

Steve Busfield

MICROSOFT is set to announce a \$1 billion alliance that would give it a foothold in the nascent market for linking television sets with the internet, according to a US analyst.

The deal with cable TV operator Telecommunications Inc is designed to speed the development of set-top boxes that provide the link, said Rob Enderle of Giga Information Group. The deal is expected to be announced at next week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

TCI will use Microsoft's investment to prepare its cable-TV network for the set-top boxes, which will deliver services ranging from Web-linked television programmes to home shopping, said Mr

Enderle. Microsoft would sell software, including the Windows CE operating system, for use in the set-top boxes which go on sale to the public early next year.

Microsoft spokesman Mark Mayes said: "This sounds very much like a rumour, and Microsoft has a policy of not commenting on rumours one way or the other."

An agreement between Microsoft, the world's biggest maker of personal-computer software, and TCI, the biggest cable TV company, would help extend Microsoft's reach beyond the desktop and into consumers' living rooms.

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates has repeatedly promoted a "Web lifestyle" that would create demand for the company's growing range of Internet-based software, and

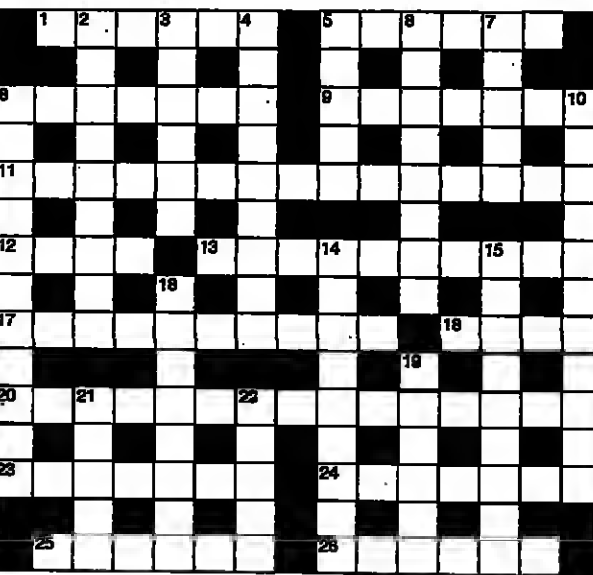
his company in recent months has been examining opportunities for entering Britain's planned digital TV market.

The MCI deal "will create a wave, a level of consumer demand that pushes Microsoft's technology," Mr Enderle said. That technology includes software for sending and managing higher-quality sound, pictures and data through the cable network.

The hardware specifications for the set-top boxes have mainly been worked out through Cable Laboratories Inc., the industry's research arm. The software specifications for set-top boxes are still in development because of the difficulty of sending high-quality data through existing cable networks and the uncertainty about how soon the networks will be upgraded.

Guardian Crossword No 21,161

Set by Janus

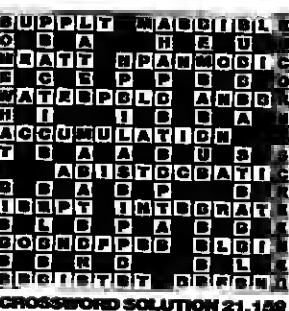


Across

- 1 Drunken revels leaving soldier in sore distress (5)
- 5 "Minor" author? (6)
- 8 Sailor's love problem ending in discharge (7)
- 9 Country girl's reading (7)
- 11 Valedictory speech saying goodbye to modern order (8,7)
- 12 Part of some picaresque narrative (4)
- 13 Ignores kind wishes from the underworld (10)
- 17 Awkward thing to manage for late workers (5,5)
- 18 Fish with single thought (4)
- 20 Perpetual mystery play? (5,5,4)
- 23 Fewer boxes round about (7)
- 24 Willow warbler rushed into vet (4-3)

Down

- 2 Having recourse to a different organisation (9)
- 3 Relations appearing in certain issues (2-4)
- 4 She will try to elicit information on crustaceans (9)
- 5 Cuttlefish is a strange record holder (5)
- 6 A map grid for example? (8)
- 7 Measure girl has to follow (5)
- 8 Equivocal answer by king to poet (6,5)
- 10 Falls through not getting cross often enough? (5,6)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,159

- 14 Clergy house containing iron dining-hall (9)
- 15 Kind of day for revolutionary character (3,5)
- 16 Emphasised when under pressure (8)
- 19 Linkster's private angle on love? (6)
- 21 Custom for example rejected by America (5)
- 22 Join some children roller-skating (5)

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At 3am you can buy bread, go dancing, be in a film in Bolton — or pop out to look at a Mone!

Inside